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JULY
2011

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HERB PROFILE:
TANSY P. 26

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Chicken & Spinach
Pizza with Fresh Basil &
Thyme on Page 45.




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From a very young age, my mind would wander to a faraway place where the aroma of a million spices filled the air and I could become lost in the dizzying array of beautiful languages, alluring foods, and breathtaking landscapes. This joyful dream of wandering has now come true as I find myself building friendships with organic farming communities around the world. A love of culture paired with my studies in plant science has led to these incredible adventures managing the overseas network of organic farms for Mountain Rose Herbs. At times like these, I wish someone would pinch me just to be sure that I'm not still dreaming.

Jennifer Gerrity
International Farms Manager



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The Summer Issue

Attract pollinators; discover brain-boosting herbs; make herbal pizzas; enjoy lemony herbs; assemble five-minute jams and jellies; and more.

Herb Profile: Old-Fashioned Tansy

Don't relegate this quaint, low-maintenance herb to weed status. Instead, bring this easy grower into your garden.

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Maintain Your Brain: 10 Herbs

Learn about brain-friendly herbs that developing research shows have a promising future in the fight to help dementia patients.

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Saxon Holt

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Quick Jams: No Canning Required

Try this quick-and-easy guide to create herb-infused jams. They can elevate any meal and are pretty enough to share.

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Fragrant & Flavorful: 3 Lemony Herbs

Jekka McVicar shares recipes for dishes with lemon herbs from her new cookbook, inspired by her herbal adventures.

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Cover Story: Easy Herbal Pizzas

Create delicious pizzas with recipes that include nutrient-rich herbs and vegetables.

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Cover photo: Povy Kendal Atchison

Birds, Bees & Butterflies: Plants for Pollinators

Explore the secrets of nature's pollinators. Some of these critters may be pests, but they lend you a helping hand to make your garden vibrant.

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THE Herb COMPANION

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July 2011

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Circle #2; see card pg 60



Taylor Cole Miller

Learning to Lean on Each Other

I'm thinking a great deal these days about the idea of belonging. In a recent bout of illness, it was the people to whom I belong—my family and my friends—who circled the wagons around me and made sure I had everything I needed to be incapacitated for a while and then to get on the road to recovery with as few impediments as possible. Their commitment, concern and just day-after-day practical assistance made all the difference in the world to me in terms of my quality of life and peace of mind.

We humans are tribal creatures at our core. We need each other in countless ways. Nothing like illness or a personal setback to drive home that point, but also we can get pretty clear on that fact when we start a garden for the first time, or try to manage the intricacies of a pressure canner, or decide to make our first tea blend. Throughout human history we have relied on teachers—our natural inclination is to look around to find someone who knows what we want to learn and soak up what knowledge we can from them. My great pleasure with *The Herb Companion* is to be that kind of resource for our readers, who are in various stages of knowledge with every aspect of this deep and ongoing conversation about nature's most useful plants. With each issue I know some readers are visiting us for the first time and have never known the wonder of their own kitchen garden. Others have cooked with herbs for years but never considered that those same herbs might be a key to health and healing. Still others know gardening from the soil up, but wouldn't know a chiffonade from a croquette. It is my hope that we provide something in every issue that broadens each reader's awareness and deepens our collective appreciation of the best nature has to offer.

Beyond reading our magazine, our readers increasingly connect with each other in a rich community that's forming through our blogs and Facebook page. I love seeing the questions people ask—and the answers they provide for others. Please join us, if you aren't already a part of the conversation.

And I also urge you to get involved in actual, 3-D, real time with each other. Join garden groups, join your local chapter of the Herb Society of America (www.herbsociety.org) or the International Herb Association (www.iberb.org) and—best of all—attend these organizations' annual conferences to mingle for a few days with other passionate herb fans. You'll find information about the conferences on their websites.

Where personal connections are concerned, the more the merrier—we all have so much to learn from each other, and so much to teach.

Onward,

K.C. Compton
Editor in Chief



Blog With Us

If you'd like to write about your experiences as part of our community of bloggers, send a note to editor@herbcompanion.com. We'd be delighted to publish your reports about herb gardening in your region, making herbal tinctures or beauty products, or other herbal endeavors.



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**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

**Sarah
Bader**

Lavender at Stonegate
Farm, Oregon

Sarah Bader

Lavender at Stonegate Farm, Oregon
Presentations: So You Want Start a Lavender Farm?
And: Secrets to Managing New Lavender Starts.



Dr. Cindy Jones

Sagescript Institute
Presentation: Herbal Extracts and
Small Scale Distilling for Hydrosols.



Barbara Lucks

Oasis Botanica
Presentation: Aromatherapy 101.
An interactive primer on essential oils.



Dr. Curtis Swift

CSU Extension Horticulture
Presentation: News from Colorado's
Lavender Scene.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

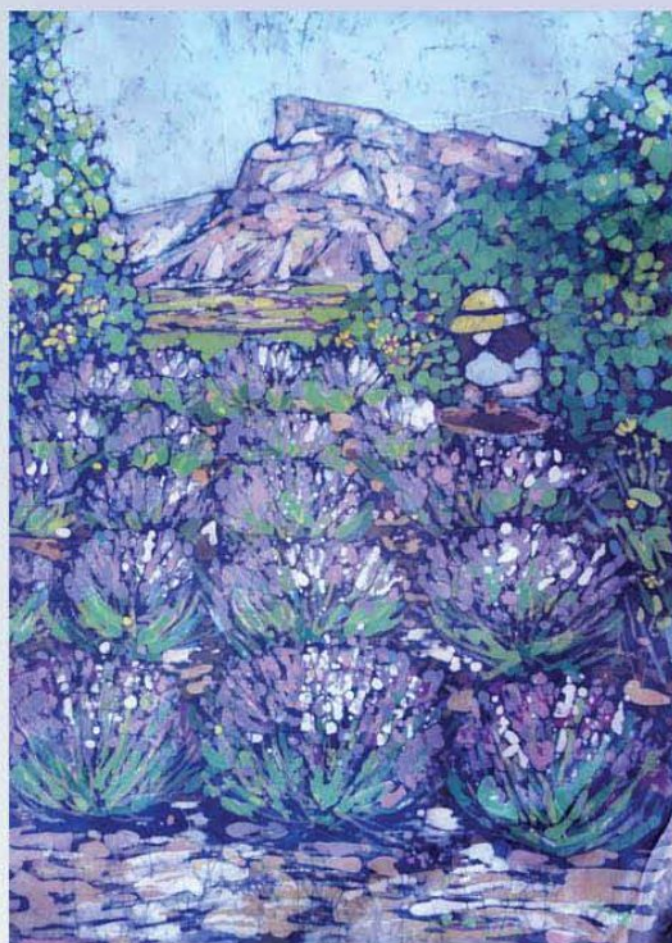
FRIDAY: All-day bus tour to lavender farms in peak bloom in western Colorado; activities, grower talks, lunch. From 8-5. (Tickets)

SATURDAY Festival in Palisade Memorial Park: Seminars, workshops, demonstrations. Shop an intriguing array of artisan products, booths, food; entertainment, activities for kids. Festival entrance is free. Open 10-5. (Tickets for workshops & seminars)

SUNDAY: Self-guided lavender farm tours, meet the growers & more. Open 10-5. Free.

Enjoy breathing in western Colorado's peaceful setting where snowmelt waters from the Rocky Mountains nourish our high-altitude farms. Marvel at how 30 different varieties of lavender thrive in our dry climate and lean soils. Meet our speakers. Colorado's wine country, plus a wealth of farmers markets, local dining, outdoor recreation and art galleries await your discovery.

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Circle #10; see card pg 60



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Dear *Herb Companion*,

I JUST WANTED to say that I loved the May 2011 issue. I am eager to find the eye-drops for sensitive and aging eyes from your “9 Herbs for Healthy Eyes” article. Does anyone have any idea where to get those? Or does anyone have a recipe for making the tincture or drops that I would need?

Ti Bo

West Terre Haute, Indiana

Try this leaf infusion with eyebright: Combine 1 tablespoon eyebright leaves with 1 cup distilled water; strain; mix with salt (1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon salt per cup); and apply as a compress or pour into an eyecup and soak each eye. (Change the solution between eyes.) If there is leftover solution, keep it refrigerated; toss after 24 hours. You could also buy herbal eyedrops, available at health-food stores. We recommend Herb Pharm’s Rue Fennel formula. It contains rue, fennel, eyebright, goldenseal and mullein. —Eds.

THE ARTICLE “PLANT a Medicinal Garden” from your May 2011 issue was a very nice introduction for herbal novices. However, I have a serious objection to the final statement concerning peppermint tea: “People prone to gastric reflux should not drink peppermint tea. Peppermint tea relaxes the sphincter.” This is not true. I don’t have time to hunt down the *JAMA* article now (it was published more than 10 years ago) but the allopaths did a double-blind study and peppermint tea was found to be as effective as proton pump inhibitors (such as Nexium) in relieving the symptoms of acid reflux. It’s not the tea—it’s the concentrated essential oil that aggravates reflux.

Cynthia Koons

Muncy, Pennsylvania

You are right. Peppermint leaf yields from 0.3 percent up to the high end of 1 percent peppermint oil. Therefore, warnings intended for pure peppermint oil do not equate to or relate to peppermint leaf. We apologize for our error. —Eds.

YOUR WONDERFUL AD “A Passion for Plants,” and the photo observing the trillium in the Willamette National Forest (May 2011) was most impressive. It brought back memories of attitudes and practices of my biology teaching days (1955-1993). At a time when curriculum emphasis was on biochemistry, I stubbornly insisted that my students also learned of the ecological significance of the environment and the plants around them.

On a field trip to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area, I startled my students when I dropped to the forest floor to more closely examine my first sighting of pink lady’s slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*). A couple of these students later became “flower floppers” themselves to get better sightings of wildflowers.

Thank you for encompassing the big picture of gardening and the ecological balance and diversity behind it.

Ed Klavon

Pennsburg, Pennsylvania

I READ THAT a root extract from Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) rivals grape extract as a resveratrol source.

As an experienced forager of wild foods, I have eaten the green shoots of Japanese knotweed as a spring pot herb, but I did not know whether the root was edible. Now I wonder if it would be possible to make my own supplement by drying and powdering

Facebook Fodder



What herbs attract pollinators to your garden?



LORA FLEMING: Here’s a picture of a bee on my oregano last summer. There were about 30 bees on there!

RACHAEL AMEN: Marshmallow and bee balm!

LISA MIDDENDORF: Echinacea, catnip, lavender, thyme, comfrey, bee balm and anise hyssop.

Visit www.facebook.com/theherbcompanion to read more Facebook Fodder. Turn to Page 54 to learn more about attracting pollinators.

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Tell Us What You Think

In our next issue, we delve deeper into the art of preparing spice blends. What are your favorite spice blends? Please email letters@herbcompanion.com with "In Basket" in the subject line.

the root and putting the powder in capsules. I realize that I would have no way of scientifically determining the quantity or quality of the active principle in the herb I gather, but could one reasonably expect some benefits and no harm?

Carol Kelly
Marion, Ohio

The problem is not using the knotweed shoots, but rather standardization to a level of resveratrol minus the other constituents. Resveratrol is typically extracted with ethyl alcohol, which is why resveratrol is higher in red wine than in grape juice. Also, the oxalic acid content (which gives it the taste of rhubarb) can produce kidney stones and aggravate conditions such as rheumatism, gout, arthritis and hyperacidity. —Eds.

IN YOUR SEPTEMBER 2010 article "Lower Your Blood Pressure," should you take all four of the herbs mentioned in the article or will any one of the herbs help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol?

Helen Robinson
Salem, Virginia

Arjuna and hawthorn are pretty similar in action. There's no harm in taking them together, but it's not necessary—one or the other will be effective. Garlic is often combined with hawthorn, and green tea is a great beverage. So mix and match as desired. —Eds.

I HAVEN'T READ *The Herb Companion* magazine for three years. My Oklahoma penfriend used to send me copies now and then. She belonged to the Herb Society of America. I haven't heard from her in a long while.

I am 72 years old and I love to grow herbs. I have talked about their benefits at local women's meetings I attend now and then. I grow red sage, thyme, fennel, yarrow, vervain, rosemary and feverfew in my garden. I would like to have someone email and chat with me sometime. I use Yahoo! messenger to keep in touch with friends whom, I am sad to say, are not herb growers. It would be so inspiring to have a friend who does.

Dale Duncan
Dannevirke, New Zealand

Readers: Email letters@herbcompanion.com with "Penfriend" in the subject line to get in touch with Dale. —Eds.

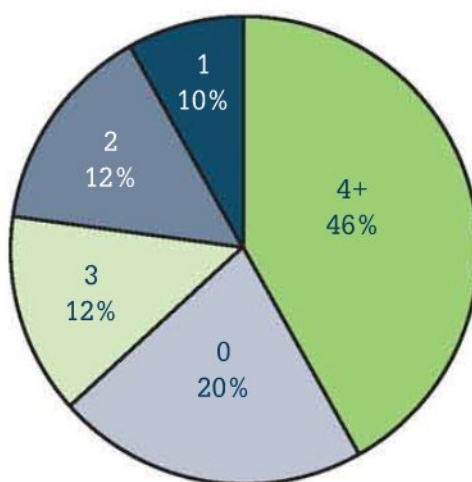
I DISCOVERED WILD horseradish and I am loving it! What a huge difference fresh horseradish is from the stuff in supermarket jars! Luckily, before I did

anything with it, I learned how to make it fresh. Keep your face away from the lid when opening a fresh batch of ground horseradish—pow! It is some strong stuff! Also, keep it in small jars and freeze because it oxidizes and its potency breaks down quite rapidly.

My boyfriend, Andy, buys fresh herbs and sticks them in the freezer still in their plastic package. I think they should be dried, or washed and blended with oil, so I buy freeze-dried or use fresh instead. He doesn't think it matters. Which is best?

Cheryl Terrace
New York

Many people harvest basil (usually in sprigs about 4 to 6 inches long with a few leaves), as well as dill, parsley, etc., to freeze in plastic bags. Andy may be onto something good. A number of owners of Thai restaurants we've talked with buy fresh lemongrass, Thai basil and Makrut lime leaves, then wash and freeze them for use in their dishes. As long as the herbs are going to be put into a cooked dish (rather than trying to use them in a salad) the method works just fine. —Eds.



Reader Poll

How many supplements do you take a day?

KAT: I take natural bioidentical hormones, which are soy- and yam-based. They are wonderful for cellular health, balancing hormones, and improving skin and hair.

AMANDA: I also take herbal infusions and superfoods, such as cacao, maca and goji berry.



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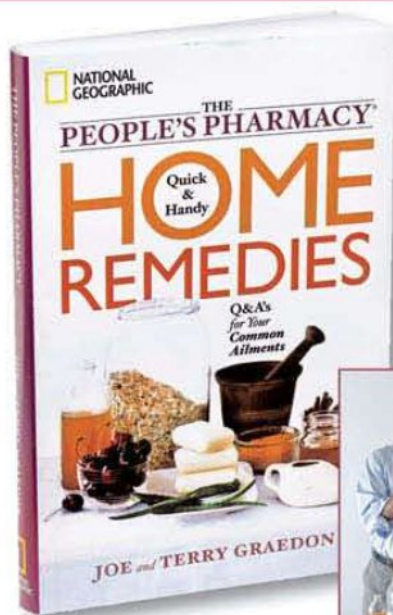


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Circle #5; see card pg 60



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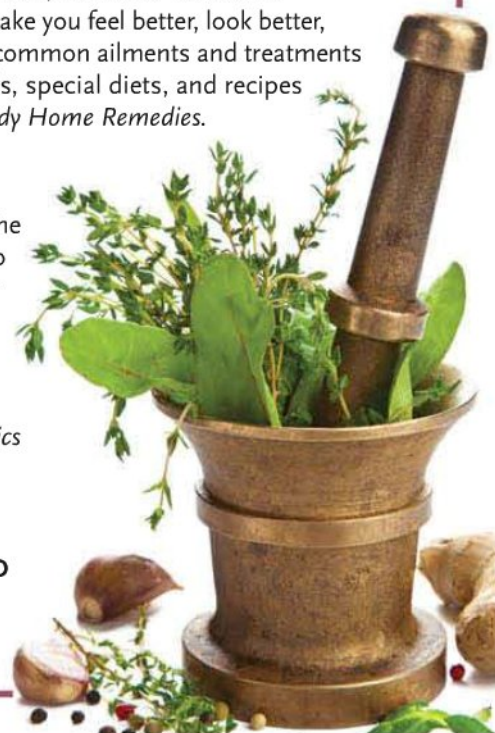
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ONE OF THE WORLD'S choice beverages for hot summer afternoons and evenings, beer and its brewing have been part of human culture for more than 10,000 years. Any number of strange plants and herbs have been fermented and imbibed, sometimes with startling effects. Honey is perhaps the oldest fermenting ingredient, but many brews included less appetizing elements. Henbane, a powerful narcotic poison of the deadly nightshade family, was sometimes added to beers of the Middle Ages, and the Egyptians brewed beer with mandrake root. Other potentially poisonous herbs used in European ales included pennyroyal and tansy. (Find a tansy profile on Page 26.)

Before Germany's 1516 Bavarian Purity Law (which restricted brewing ingredients to hops, barley and water), poisonous or psychotropic herbs were often included in ale recipes, but they weren't the only ones. Sage ale, one of the most popular brews of the Middle Ages, was considered almost as a medicinal tonic, with the side effect of being highly inebriating. Yarrow ale was a popular choice for weddings because of its tendency to increase energy, act as an aphrodisiac and generally "make the guests crazy." Other traditional European ales were often made with heather (called *leann fraoich* in Gaelic), meadowsweet, juniper, elder flowers and sweet woodruff.

Today the most common brewing herb is hops, no question, and that fact is largely due to purity laws such as the one mentioned above. Not all of today's brewers adhere to these guidelines, however, and it may be worthwhile to expand your beer-

tasting palate. While a home brewery might be your best chance to try the most creative herbal beers, large brewing companies occasionally use herbs in more mainstream brews. Coriander is often used in Belgian-style white beers and multiple hop varieties flavor IPAs. Other beers contain lavender, cardamom, seaweed, heather, meadowsweet or elder. Check out some of the options in the caption above. —*Lauren Holt is an editorial intern at The Herb Companion. Katie Priebe contributed research.*

Did you know?

While most beers today are made with hops, traditional European ales counted clary sage, gentian, ginger, comfrey, horehound, milk thistle and rosemary among their ingredients.

Beer brewed with hops produces a soporific effect while other herbs, such as yarrow and juniper, increase energy and act as aphrodisiacs when fermented and imbibed. —*Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers* (Siris, 1998)

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oregonwildharvest.com/allergens

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Circle #14; see card pg 60

Fresh Clips

Ease Allergies Naturally

SUMMER'S JUST AROUND the corner—is it time to break out the picnic supplies or time to start popping antihistamines, decongestants and steroids? If you suffer from allergic rhinitis, more commonly called hay fever, you're probably focused on the latter. But these medications—which are expensive and in many cases have side effects—aren't the only path to allergy relief.

What causes allergies?

Allergy symptoms indicate that the immune system—a complex, highly regulated system—has gotten out of balance. The symptoms resemble a bad cold that doesn't go away. All parts of the respiratory tract can be affected, including the nose, sinuses, ears and throat. When the lungs are involved, persistent coughing or wheezing results, a condition called asthma.

Underlying these symptoms is an inflammatory disorder—a problem that results from excessive inflammation in the body. It's as if the eyes, nose and lungs are “on fire.” The symptoms may be confined to the respiratory tract, but the whole body is involved.

In simple terms, inflammation is the normal physiologic response to injury. When inflammation occurs in response to a trauma or infection, it's usually beneficial. Sometimes, however, the immune system overreacts. Instead of cooling off after the virus is gone, it continues to act as if it were under attack. The inflammation becomes chronic and the immune system becomes an agent of destruction. The fire gets out of control and normal tissue gets damaged.

Allergic rhinitis is thought to be a “hypersensitivity” syndrome, a genetically determined condition in which the immune system overreacts to common substances floating around in the atmosphere such as foods, dust, molds, pollens and animal dander. These substances may be harmless to a person without allergies, but the immune system of an afflicted person sees them as a threat and attacks them with a vengeance.

Why holistic treatment?

From a conventional medical viewpoint, treating allergies means avoiding the offending agents and suppressing the symptoms with drugs. While this may help a lot of people, it can also create a sense of frustration and helplessness. Drugs can help suppress symptoms but are often expensive and bring with them a host of side effects. Allergy shots work through an entirely different mechanism. They can be very effective in some people but are expensive, necessitate numerous visits to the doctor, can take years to work and some people find the injections unpleasant. Given these concerns, wouldn't it be preferable to examine the problem more holistically?



Millions of Americans (estimates range from 10 to 17 percent of the population) suffer from allergic rhinitis. A healthful diet and a clean, purified bedroom can help allergy sufferers.

Healing at the Source

A few basic changes in one's environment and diet can help calm the excessive inflammatory response and restore balance to the immune system.

1) **Purify your bedroom.** For a person with allergic tendencies, a clean environment is crucial. This is especially true for the bedroom, where most people spend half their lives.

2) **Flushing the nose** out with salt water twice a day using a bulb syringe or neti pot can reduce congestion and drainage. A typical formula for the flush solution is 4 ounces warm water, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon baking soda.

3) **Consider what you eat.** Although your symptoms may be confined to your nose, you may suffer from undiagnosed food allergies that feed the fire of inflammation. Gluten, dairy products and yeast are common offenders.


Even if you don't have any food allergies, diet still plays an important role in your health. Sixty percent of the immune system resides along the lining of the intestines, so it's doubly important to keep the gut healthy. One way to do this is to eliminate refined carbohydrates and increase dietary fiber from whole grains, nuts and seeds.

4) **Wipe out free radicals.** In excessive amounts, free radicals fuel the flame of inflammation and damage healthy tissue. Antioxidants neutralize these free radicals and prevent them from doing further mischief.


The rich blue, green, yellow, orange and red pigments found in fruits and vegetables are all antioxidants. About 35 percent of these pigments are from the carotenoid family; the remaining 65 percent are flavonoids. As it turns out, flavonoids have antioxidant properties, and act as anti-inflammatory agents that help balance and restore normal immune function.

5) **Control inflammation.** It appears that the omega-3 EFAs found in flax oil and deep-sea fish, such as salmon, haddock and cod, tend to act as anti-inflammatory agents. Another beneficial EFA, called gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), is found in evening primrose, borage and black currant seed oil.

While a diet containing all of these substances is crucial for bringing immune function back to normal, a person with full-blown allergies may need to take higher doses of antioxidants and essential fatty acids in supplement form. —Robert Rountree, M.D., is coauthor of *Smart Medicine for a Healthier Child* (Avery Publishing Group, 1994).




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THE FROSTY, BLOOMLESS months of fall and winter offer their own charms as mosses, lichens and mushrooms pop from every moist nook under the forest canopy, but who doesn't long for the sun-filled beauty of handpicked wildflowers? The blossoms of summer can be enjoyed year-round with one simple tool, easily crafted during a lazy afternoon at home: a plant press.

Plant presses have been used for hundreds of years to dry and preserve specimens for safe travel across vast continents and rough seas. Explorers would guard their botanical treasures like gold, hoping to return home with a variety of floral curiosities for later identification, taxonomic cataloging and even cherished supplies for artwork.

Presses can be small enough to carry in your hiking pack, perfect for collecting herbaceous plant leaves, roots and flowers as you wander, or they can be made large enough to press a towering mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) from your garden, root to flower. It is important to press flowers as soon as possible after picking them to improve your results and avoid wilting. You should also make note of the plant's common name, Latin name, location, height, habitat, abundance, date, and other valuable information that can fade from memory and leave you stumped when you're finally ready to use your pressings.

A fun project would be to document your favorite wild or garden plants in a home herbarium. To do this, simply arrange your specimens on acid-free paper with all of the pertinent harvesting information and glue or cover with contact paper to conveniently catalog your prized pressings. —*Erin McIntosh botanizes and wildcrafts medicinal plants in the magnificent Oregon Cascades. To find instructions for pressing your plants, visit www.herbcompanion.com/plantpress.*



Cardboard Plant Press

Make a gorgeous plant press easily and economically with materials from your recycling bin. This press makes a great gift.

Several old newspapers
Corrugated cardboard
2 pieces of wood
2 straps with buckles that can be secured (belts, canvas straps, light bungee cords or rope)

- 1** Fold individual sheets of newspaper along the normal folding creases. These folded sheets will become your blotters.
- 2** Cut the cardboard to fit your folded newspaper blotters. This will save you the time and trouble of cutting every piece of newspaper to size. You'll want the zigzag corrugation to run through the width of your cardboard, not the length, to allow for maximum airflow.
- 3** Assemble your press by placing three single sheets of folded newspaper on top of one piece of cardboard, and then continue by layering another piece of cardboard, three more individual sheets of folded newspaper, and another piece of cardboard. Repeat this process until you've reached your desired stack.
- 4** Next, sandwich your stack between two pieces of wood that measure about the same size or 1/2 inch larger than the cardboard. You can decorate the wood boards with paint, markers or decoupage if you're feeling extra crafty!
- 5** Secure two straps around the width of the boards to hold it all together. Old belts work perfectly; just keep in mind that the press doesn't need too much pressure to work well.



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Circle #11; see card pg 60

Fresh Clips

GROWING TIPS Nasturtiums

Grow nasturtiums in any well-drained, slightly moist and average soil in full sun to light shade for continual flowers.

Nasturtiums fend off garden pests from neighboring plants. Grow it near squash to repel cucumber beetles or any garden plants to repel aphids. Black aphids, however, do like nasturtiums. If black aphids become a problem, control with an organic soap spray.

Dwarf varieties are ideal for smaller areas, grown in a planter box or container, or when used as a border plant to edge a flower bed or walkway. Use climbing types to cover fences and banks, or to trail in hanging baskets, over rocks or cascading down a wall. —Kris Wetherbee



Editor's Pick

Women's Garden Hat by **Sunday Afternoons**, \$24

While harvesting your bounty of nasturtiums, stay cool with this lightweight gardening hat. The 3-inch kettle-style brim with certified UV protection is cute as well as functional. We love the six plant-themed color choices and the fact that the hat can be packed flat for easy transport.
www.sundayafternoons.com

GARDEN TO TABLE

Edible Nasturtiums

ADAPTABLE AND REMARKABLY VERSATILE plants, nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum majus*) are one of the easiest annuals to grow. Their brightly colored flowers and leaves also make for tasty additions in the kitchen.

Both the leaves and flowers are edible; leaves are snappy with a peppery flavor, and the flowers are softly sweet with a subtle spiciness.

Chopped leaves or flowers make for a zesty addition to mayonnaise, dips or spreads, and vinaigrettes.

The leaves and flowers can be used to add a rainbow of color and spice to any salad.

Stuff and roll leaves, then stuff blossoms with spinach salad, egg salad, tuna salad or chicken salad for a quick appetizer.

Use whole or chopped blossoms as tasty, edible garnishes to decorate creamy soups, herbal butters, or quiches and tarts, as well as cakes and cupcakes.

Add peppery flavor to stir-fries and soups by adding chopped leaves within the last five minutes of cooking time.

Combine leaves with other greens to top off a sandwich or a pizza. (Find herbal pizza recipes on Page 50.)
—*Kris Wetherbee is a contributing editor who lives in western Oregon.*



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Whip up these simple at-home beauty treatments for a glow straight from the Mediterranean.

BY JANICE COX

Easy Mediterranean Spa Treatments

The sunny region bordering the Mediterranean Sea has long been associated with health and beauty. In fact, many modern beauty treatments and products originated in ancient Greece and Rome. This region provides skin- and body-healthy ingredients, such as fresh herbs, oils and honey—all full of skin-beautifying and anti-aging nutrients. Fresh Mediterranean herbs such as oregano and thyme have been used for centuries because they are strong antioxidants and also contain antibacterial properties. Pure honey has been used as a natural energizer and is also a natural humectant, attracting and locking in moisture. Natural oils such as olive and grapeseed are used to cleanse and moisturize skin and hair. Grapeseed oil is easily absorbed by the skin and is also loaded with resveratrol, the same antioxidant found in

red wine. Other popular ingredients that can be used to keep your skin and hair clean and healthy are pine nuts, chickpeas, Greek-style yogurt and fresh tomatoes.

What is a Turkish bath?

The Turkish *hamam*, or bath, is an ancient healing treatment that has been around for thousands of years and is still popular today, especially in western Europe. The hamam also can refer to a structure, specially outfitted for the treatment. A full treatment includes a time of relaxation, dry brushing, bathing, skin exfoliation, and a massage of rich oils and lotions. There is no time limit, but give yourself at least an hour for complete head-to-toe pampering.

The process is similar to that of a sauna, where bathers sit in hot rooms and perspire before bathing in warm water followed by a cool water rinse. During the bathing process, scented soaps, body scrubs, and brushes are used to cleanse and refresh the skin. Some treatments include a massage with natural oils after bathing, then a period of relaxation in a cool room. Often, a cup of Turkish coffee or tea is enjoyed.

Thanks to modern plumbing, you can recreate the feeling of a hamam at home—just add a cup of mineral salts and a few drops of a favorite essential oil, such as sweet orange, to the tub, and soak away. Use a body scrub, like the Orange Spice Body Scrub (see Page 24), and a natural brush or loofah while bathing. Pat your skin dry with a Turkish towel (if you have one) and massage a rich natural oil such as grapeseed or olive oil into your skin to lock in moisture. Lie down in a cool room and enjoy a cup of spiced tea and relax, or even nap. Turn the page for some more simple at-home spa recipes to try.



Get the Mediterranean Glow

Besides this list of popular Mediterranean ingredients, you'll find more recipes on Page 24.

Greek-style yogurt: Found in the dairy section of your grocery store, Greek-style yogurt is thicker than regular yogurt and contains more protein. Use as a skin-cleansing and softening facial mask. Simply spread a tablespoon or two onto clean skin, let sit for 15 to 20 minutes, then rinse well.

Grapeseed oil: Found in the cooking oil section of your grocery store, grapeseed oil might seem an unlikely source for healthy skin. Unlike other heavy and greasy oils, this oil is light and easily absorbed by the skin. Grapeseed oil makes a wonderful after-bath or body oil to help seal in moisture.

Pine nuts: Pine nuts are mostly known for making pesto, but they also are perfect for skin cleansing and make a mild scrub for sensitive skin types. Pine nuts contain pinolenic acid and pycnogenol, both powerful antioxidants. To use, simply grind fresh pine nuts in a food processor or blender and mix with a bit of Greek-style yogurt or water to create a skin scrub.

Oregano: This popular herb is not just for pizza and Greek salads—it has powerful antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. Ancient Greeks used oregano in their baths and in scented oils because they enjoyed the mood-altering, uplifting scent. Place a handful of fresh oregano inside a muslin tea bag and add to your bath, or add dried oregano leaves to bath salts and oils.

Tomatoes: These fresh red fruits make an excellent skin-cleansing mask perfect for oily skin types. They also help rid your complexion of blackheads and surface impurities because they are mildly acidic and cleansing. Tomato juice also is a well-known deodorizer and can be used as a hair rinse to rid your hair of strong smells, such as smoke.

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Circle #3; see card pg 60

BODY & SOUL

Orange Spice Body Scrub

Try this simple recipe for a Turkish bath scrub to use during your Turkish bath experience. Find a description of the Turkish bath experience on Page 23. It can be replicated at home for a perfect hour of relaxation. **MAKES 10 OUNCES**

- 1 cup raw sugar
- ¼ cup walnut oil
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground clove buds
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon dried orange peel
- 2 to 3 drops sweet orange essential oil (optional)

1 Stir together all ingredients until well-mixed. Spoon into a clean jar with tight-fitting lid.

2 To use: Before bathing and standing in the tub or shower, massage the mixture all over your body to gently exfoliate and moisturize your skin. Shower or soak in the tub for 15 to 20 minutes, then pat your skin dry and follow with more natural oil or rich body lotion.



Did You Know?

Fresh thyme has been used by the Greeks as a cleanser since ancient times. Soldiers even bathed in thyme water to give themselves vigor and strength. They were onto something; thyme's antiseptic properties make it a useful ingredient in skin cleaners, which is why we still use it for beauty products in modern times.

Super Salt Glow

Salt scrubs date back to ancient times and rejuvenate the skin and boost circulation. Red hibiscus leaves help cleanse and refresh the skin. You also may want to sip a cup of hibiscus tea after your treatment. Hibiscus leaves can be found in bulk at most natural food or grocery stores. You also can use hibiscus tea in this recipe. **MAKES 16 OUNCES**

2 cups kosher salt
1 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon red hibiscus leaves

- 1** Stir all ingredients together until you have a thick paste. Spoon the scrub into a clean jar with a tight-fitting lid.
- 2** To use: Stand in the shower or tub, take a handful of the paste and massage it into your skin, all over your body, starting with your feet. Rinse well with warm water. Don't use soap, or you will remove the oil and its moisturizing benefits.

Honey-Thyme Cleanser

Greek honey made from thyme flowers is some of the best in the world—it is known for having a mild taste and high nutritional value. It can be found in the honey section of your grocery store. **MAKES 5 OUNCES**

¼ cup pure thyme honey or plain honey
¼ cup water
1 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped
2 tablespoons liquid castile soap

- 1** Gently stir all ingredients together. Pour cleanser into a clean container.
- 2** To use: Pour a small amount in the palm of your hand, then massage it gently into your skin. You also can use as a simple shampoo for your hair. Rinse thoroughly with warm water, then pat dry.

Moisturizing Mask

This is an excellent rich, hydrating mask for individuals with dry skin. It was inspired by creamy, delicious hummus, the popular Mediterranean spread. Both the olive oil and the chickpeas (also known as garbanzo beans) are great for moisturizing the skin. You can find chickpeas at the grocery store easily. Rinse well before using. **MAKES 3 OUNCES**

¼ cup mashed cooked chickpeas
1 teaspoon light olive oil
¼ teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1 egg yolk

- 1** Stir all ingredients together until you have a smooth paste.
- 2** To use: After cleansing, spread the entire mixture over your face and neck, avoiding the delicate areas around your eyes and mouth. Leave it on for 20 minutes, then rinse well with warm water followed by cool water, and pat your skin dry.

Try These

Don't have time for home-made recipes? You can still get the luscious benefits of the Mediterranean with these *Herb Companion* picks.



Honey Almond Nourishing Body Cream
by **100% Pure**, \$15. www.100percentpure.com

Hyaluronic Hydrating Mask by **derma e**, \$29.50.
www.dermae.net

Yes to Tomatoes Volumizing Shampoo by **Yes to Carrots**,
\$8.99. www.yestocarrots.com

Mountain Honey Sugar Scrub by **Mountain Girl Botanics**,
\$11.99. www.mountaingirlbotanics.com

Sweet orange essential oil by **GloryBee Foods**, \$6.50.
www.glorybeefoods.com

Perfect Parsley Toner

Fresh parsley promotes circulation and has antiseptic qualities. Combined with lemon juice, it makes a powerful purifier. **MAKES 8 OUNCES**

1 cup water
¼ cup chopped parsley
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

- 1** Bring water to a boil. Place parsley in a clean heatproof bowl and pour boiling water over it. Allow mixture to cool completely, then strain out solids and mix in lemon juice. Pour into a clean, airtight container.
- 2** To use: Apply to your face with a clean cotton pad after cleansing.

Rosewater After-Bath Splash

Rose petals are naturally astringent and cleansing. They also have mild antiseptic properties that help kill bacteria and germs. **MAKES 8 OUNCES**

½ cup rosewater
½ cup distilled water
1 tablespoon witch hazel

- 1** Combine all ingredients and pour into a clean container or spray bottle.
- 2** To use: Splash or spray onto clean skin after bathing. 🌿

Janice Cox is the co-author, with her daughter, Lauren Cox, of *EcoBeauty* (Ten Speed Press, 2009). See Page 68 to purchase the book.



BY THE HERB COMPANION STAFF

A Weed It Ain't

Tansy

Tanacetum vulgare

Compositae (Asteraceae)

Hardy perennial

Common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) is an upright perennial herb with strongly aromatic, fernlike green leaves whose aroma reminds some people of pine, others of chrysanthemum or camphor. Under favorable conditions, the plant may reach 5 feet tall, but 3 feet is more likely. From July to October, it is decked with flat clusters of ¼- to ½-inch mustard-yellow buttons like the centers of daisies. The seed heads persist through the winter; in spring, the tiny seeds drop to the ground and soon germinate to begin a new generation. Common tansy is a native of Europe and Asia. The Puritans brought it to this country in the 17th century, and it is now naturalized throughout much of Canada and the United States.

Curly or fern-leaf tansy (*T. v.* var. *crispum*) is common tansy's city cousin. Its leaves are longer, broader, more finely cut and down-curving. The plant is denser and more decorative and grows only 2 to 3 feet tall. The flowers are similar to those of the common species, but the plant may not blossom at all where summers are cool.

Both the English name tansy and the Latin generic name *Tanacetum* are thought to derive from the Greek *athanasia*, or immortality. What does tansy have to do with immortality? There are several possible connections. The flowers are long-lasting; the leaves were used to preserve dead bodies (or at least to disguise the smell), and in Greek mythology, Ganymede, a beautiful youth

You can grow quaint tansy in your garden easily. Just remember, it's considered toxic today, so don't ingest this herb.

carried up to Olympus by an eagle to become cupbearer of the gods, was made immortal with a drink containing tansy.

Many people know tansy as a roadside weed, an opportunistic inhabitant of waste places, but herbalists of old considered it a valuable medicinal herb, good for just about any health problem. They recommended it for (among other ailments) worms, hysteria, kidney weakness, fevers, flatulence and gout. Externally, tansy was applied to rashes and to the swelling accompanying a sprain. In Sussex, leaves placed in the shoes were thought to cure ague. Some uses seem contradictory: It was prescribed to bring on menstruation, yet when boiled in beer and drunk or when the bruised leaves were applied to the navel, it was thought to prevent miscarriages. Small doses of the essential oil were used to treat epilepsy, but larger ones could cause seizures or death.

The essential oil is today considered toxic and potentially fatal; it contains thujone, a convulsant and narcotic. It makes sense to avoid *any* medicinal or culinary concoction containing tansy, especially during pregnancy. Even when used externally, tansy can irritate the skin; the *AMA Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants* (American Medical Association Press, 1985) lists tansy in a table of plants that cause contact dermatitis.

Tansy was a common strewing herb and had a great reputation for repelling ants and moths. Cooks rubbed the leaves on meat to repel flies. This practice is not recommended today.

Growing and Harvesting

You don't have to have a green thumb to grow tansy. Although it's probably too coarse and scraggly for indoor growing, it grows practically anywhere outdoors, in sun or part shade, in rich loam or poor sand or clay. Although it grows best in moist, well-drained soil rich in organic matter, it grows so rampantly anyway that a poor soil might be a better choice to help keep it within bounds. Common tansy is readily propagated by divisions as well as from seed. Fern-leaf tansy needs to be propagated by divisions if it doesn't flower where you live. Divide plants in early spring.

Tansy has been recommended as a companion plant to raspberries, fruit trees and some vegetables to control ants, aphids, squash bugs and various beetles and caterpillars. However, not only is there no scientific confirmation of any beneficial effects of this alliance, there is some evidence that when tansy is planted with brassicas, cabbage worms are more numerous, and when planted with squashes, the squash plants may be smaller.

As tansy is very attractive to aphids, its role in aphid control



Rob Cardillo

may be to lure them off neighboring vegetables rather than to repel them from the area. A soapy water spray will reduce the aphid population. Nematodes are another pest of tansy. Working compost or other organic matter into the soil may help make it less inviting.

Ornamental and Other Uses

Many gardeners would agree with Frances Bardswell, who wrote in *The Herb Garden* (first published in 1911): "We think the Tansy too much of a vagrant to be allowed a footing in the Herb garden." Others would include tansy for its historical value or simply because they like the way it looks. It is best placed at the back of the herb bed, near a fence or wall, which will help keep its tall stems from flopping over in winds and rain.

The lush green leaves of fern-leaf tansy are equally at home in the herb garden or the perennial bed. Plants can even be pruned to make a low hedge. In the back of the border, fern-leaf tansy looks good with mugwort, valerian, fennel and dill, and contrasts pleasantly with the gray foliage of horehound. It makes a nice backdrop for shorter yellow or white flowers. For a fragrant garden, combine tansy with wormwood, blue sage and valerian.

Tansy flowers are prized for their longevity in dried arrangements. The dried leaves and flowers can be used in sachets and potpourris as well.

Chances are, you'll succeed in growing tansy beyond your wildest expectations. Aside from sharing the plants with friends and neighbors (who may not appreciate your generosity), what can you do with them? Extra plants can be a potassium-rich addition to your compost pile. You can even brew up a tansy tea (a handful of leaves to a pint of boiling water), which, when cool, you can use to water your houseplants. A versatile herb indeed! 🌿

Maintain Your Brain

Though nothing so far can cure or prevent dementia, many herbs show promise in combating its memory-threatening menace.

By Linda B. White, M.D.

Imagine this. You're driving in the city. Nothing is familiar. You're not even sure of the cardinal directions. You hesitate at an intersection, car horns blaring behind you. Yet you're not a new arrival to this place. You've lived in this city for many years, are within five miles of your house—and you have recently received the diagnosis of dementia.

Defining Dementia

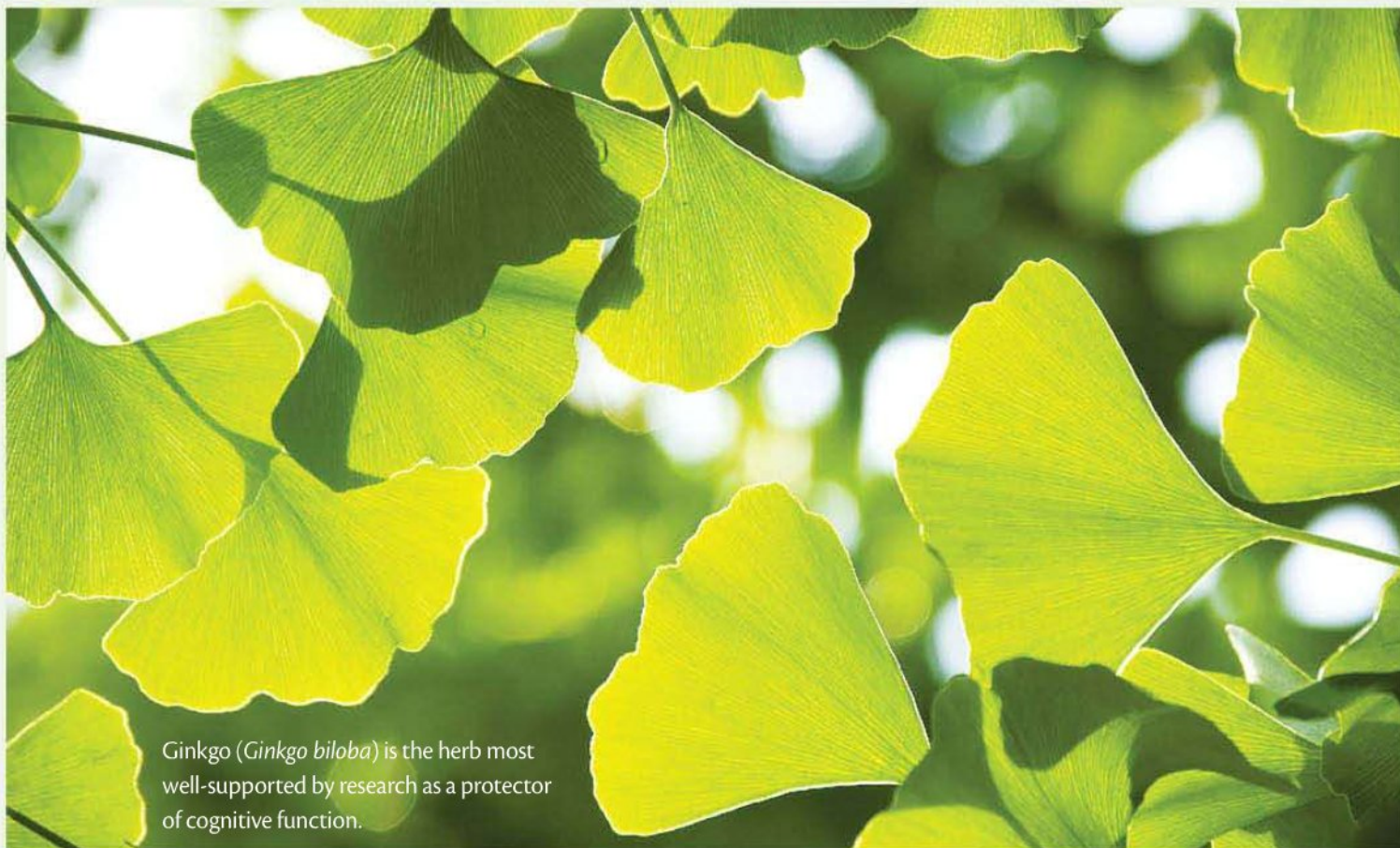
Many people wonder whether mislaying the keys or blanking on the names of acquaintances at cocktail parties telegraph an insidious downslide into dementia. Taken alone, minor episodes of forgetfulness are normal. People with dementia don't just forget a friend's name, but much of their shared history. It becomes difficult to interact with other people, think abstractly, solve problems, speak, write, and comprehend printed and spoken words. This chronic, progressive condition can eventually erode the ability to perform simple tasks as basic as getting dressed in the morning.

There are more than 60 types of dementia. The most common type is Alzheimer's disease (AD), which afflicts more than 35 million people worldwide and 5.5 million Americans. This is followed by vascular dementia (also called multi-infarct dementia) and Parkinson's disease (a disease that impairs muscle control).

Unfortunately, dementia lacks a cure. Drugs such as Aricept and Namenda can produce modest improvements, but do not stop the course of the disease.



Drinking green tea (*Camellia sinensis*) can help reduce your risk for both dementia and cardiovascular disease. You can also try a standardized extract.



Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) is the herb most well-supported by research as a protector of cognitive function.

Herbal Defense

Worldwide, traditional healers prize selected herbs for sustaining mental function. So far, the research on herbs to enhance memory in normal people and in those with dementia remains preliminary. As with pharmaceuticals, no herb has yet been shown to cure dementia, or to prevent it from developing. Nevertheless, some experts are quite optimistic about particular herbs.

One such expert is Con Stough, Ph.D., a professor of neuropsychology at the Brain Sciences Institute at Swinburne University in Melbourne, Australia. He points out that, while pharmaceuticals tend to have a single action, herbs can have multiple, often synergistic actions. Because AD and other dementias have multiple causes, this herbal multitasking is important.

Factors Associated with an Increased Risk of Dementia

- Inflammation
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Cigarette smoking
- Depression
- Genetics
- Extreme stress with elevations in stress hormones



The herb best supported by research is **ginkgo** (*Ginkgo biloba*). So says neuropsychopharmacologist Jerry Cott, Ph.D., a renowned researcher, lecturer and writer. Standardized leaf extracts are antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, improve circulation to the brain, and protect brain cells from beta-amyloid (a misfolded protein that accumulates in the brains of those with AD). In mice with an Alzheimer's-like condition, ginkgo extracts inhibit damage to nerve cells and promote nerve cell growth and the generation of new cells in vulnerable brain areas.

In a recent trial of people with dementia, 240 mg a day of ginkgo standardized extract improved memory and attention, as well as relieving some of the depression, anxiety and agitation that can complicate the disease. Reviews of the ginkgo research conclude the herb is significantly more effective than placebo in stabilizing or improving cognitive function in people with AD. Ginkgo has also been shown comparable to the drug Aricept.

Furthermore, a couple of studies suggest ginkgo perks up mental function in elders with mild age-related memory impairment. Some but not all studies show improved cognitive processes in healthy people, particularly those older than 50.

The million-dollar question is, can ginkgo prevent this dreaded disease? Two recent trials say no—not if you wait to start the herb in your 80s, particularly if you don't remember to take your pills. In one of these studies, a subgroup analysis did show some benefit among those who consistently took their ginkgo. Preliminary results are now available for a much-awaited French trial called the GuidAge Study, in which 2,854 elderly people with memory problems (but no dementia) took either 120 mg

of a ginkgo extract or a placebo twice a day for five years. Again, overall there was no statistically significant difference in the rate of progression to dementia. However, among the people who took their ginkgo as directed for at least four years, the development of dementia was cut in half.

The Ayurvedic herb **bacopa** (*Bacopa monnieri*) is also gaining a reputation as a brain aid. Stough, who has done much of the research on bacopa, says the herb has several anti-Alzheimer's actions. "It removes beta-amyloid. And it is a strong anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and metal chelator." He adds, "There is a growing consensus indicating that bacopa and particularly CDRI08 [a special standardized extract] improve memory and cognition in non-AD patients."

In the largest and most recent study, 107 healthy adults took either a placebo or a standardized bacopa extract (two 150-mg tablets a day) for three months. Those who faithfully took the herb performed significantly better on memory tests. A 12-week study of healthy adults showed bacopa improved learning and memory and reduced anxiety. So far, one-time doses of bacopa do not seem to have an appreciable impact on cognitive function.

Ginkgo and bacopa combined may also improve mental function in healthy adults. While study results are mixed, outcomes may depend upon the dose and the duration of treatment.

Stough is excited about ongoing investigations into the effects of 12 months of bacopa extract (CDRI08) in healthy elderly people and of three to six months of bacopa in people with AD.

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) has a long history in Ayurvedic medicine as a *rasayana*, or rejuvenative tonic—a substance to promote longevity, sharpen the mind, protect against the ravages of stress, and reduce anxiety. In test-tube studies, root

Where to Buy the Basics

Try these healthy living staples:

Sage essential oil by **Aura Cacia**, \$9.99.

www.auracacia.com

Oothu Garden Green tea from

Choice Organic Teas, \$4.69.

www.choiceorganict teas.com

Organic turmeric powder by

Red Monkey, \$2.29.

www.redmonkeyfoods.com



Reducing Risks

Research has yet to prove that changing one's lifestyle reduces the risk of dementia. However, several strategies have at least preliminary support.

Diet matters. What you eat influences the composition of your brain; provides nutrients that protect against oxidative stress and inflammation; contributes raw materials to make neurotransmitters; and keeps the arteries to the brain healthy. Whereas diets high in saturated fat (which comes mainly from meat and dairy) increase dementia risk, those replete with vegetables and fish lower it. The Mediterranean diet, which emphasizes fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts and olive oil, seems to protect against AD and slow the rate of age-related cognitive decline.

The type of fish consumed may be important. People who eat cold-water fish, which is rich in the brain-friendly fatty acid docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), reduce their dementia risk. Fatty fish is also a food source of vitamin D, which promotes good brain function and nerve protection. Many Americans have insufficient blood levels of this vitamin, and low levels correlate with dementia.

Stay active. In an exciting new study of 120 older adults, an aerobic training program increased the size of the hippocampus (a brain region that shrinks some with advancing age and more dramatically in AD) and improved spatial memory. Earlier research has supported the notion that physical exercise promotes brain health.

Use it or lose it. Higher educational attainment, spending more time on intellectual activities and working are associated with a reduced probability of AD. Perhaps people build their brain reserves and can lose more neurons before impairment shows. Or perhaps people continue solving Sudoku puzzles because they don't have dementia. Nevertheless, some research shows that memory exercises and less-structured intellectual pursuits can yield benefits for healthy older adults and those beginning to lose their mental edge.

Your best bets to maintain your brain are to eat a plant-based diet rich in berries, red grapes and curried food, drink green tea, regularly participate in an exercise that makes you smile and that you can do with friends, take time to relax, and keep learning. If you've entered the autumn of your life, should you take any herbs? Research hasn't answered that question. In the meantime, Dr. Jerry Cott and I are both taking our daily doses of bacopa and ginkgo.

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) is traditionally recognized as a rejuvenating tonic that can help sharpen the mind and reduce anxiety.



©2011 Steven Foster

extracts protect nerve cells from beta-amyloid, increase the healthy branching of nerve cells in the hippocampus (a brain area damaged by stress overload and AD), and improve memory in normal and demented mice. So far, no studies have investigated its potential benefits in preventing or treating dementia in humans.

Long used to enhance vitality, **Asian ginseng** (*Panax ginseng*) and **American ginseng** (*P. quinquefolius*) benefit the brain. Like ginkgo, Asian ginseng protects nerve cells from beta-amyloid and other toxins. Both species are adaptogens, substances that mitigate stress overload. Chronic stress, according to animal studies, atrophies brain areas involved in memory.

Alexander Panossian, Ph.D., head of research and development at the Swedish Herbal Institute, has published numerous articles on adaptogens such as ginseng and rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*). He believes both that stress overload is a risk factor for dementia and that “adaptogens might be very beneficial in preventing dementia.”

While research has yet to prove that theory, two preliminary studies found that Asian ginseng, as an add-on to drug treatment, improved cognitive function in people with Alzheimer’s disease. Both Asian and American ginseng (with or without ginkgo) have been shown to boost memory in healthy people.

Another promising adaptogen is **rhodiola** (*Rhodiola rosea*). The root of this Arctic plant has a long history in folk medicine. Research in the former Soviet Union revealed enhancement of physical and mental function during times of stress. In more recent research by Panossian and others, rhodiola extracts improve symptoms of anxiety, depression and stress burnout, and reduce

mental fatigue. One study showed improvement in people with “cognitive deficiencies.” In rat studies, extracts increase key brain chemicals (including acetylcholine), protect nerves and reduce cognitive impairment in a condition like AD.

Rhodiola hasn’t yet been studied in people with dementia. Nevertheless, Richard P. Brown, M.D., and Patricia Gerbarg, M.D., authors of *The Rhodiola Revolution* (Rodale, 2005), have found that standardized extracts can enhance memory and cognitive function in their patients, including those with age-related memory decline and mild dementia. Even more effective, they say, is the combination of rhodiola with two other adaptogens—**eleuthero** (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) and **schisandra** (*Schisandra chinensis*).

Gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*) is a ground cover native to India, Australia and Southeast Asia. The herb is an adaptogen, wound healer, circulatory stimulant and brain tonic. Scientific research only recently has begun to validate its ability to improve cognition. In a 2008 Thai study, a gotu kola extract enhanced working memory and improved mood in a group of 28 elderly adults.

Looking for the herbs from this article?

Here are some products to try:



- Ginkgold by **Nature's Way**, \$22.99. www.naturesway.com
- Bacopa liquid extract by **Herb Pharm**, \$12. www.herb-pharm.com
- American Ginseng by **Oregon's Wild Harvest**, \$21.99. www.oregonswildharvest.com
- Panax Ginseng by **NOW Foods**, \$9.95. www.nowfoods.com
- Ashwagandha Root capsules by **Gaia Herbs**, \$23.99. www.gaiaherbs.com
- Rhodiola Energy capsules by **Enzymatic Therapy**, \$15.95. www.enzymatictherapy.com
- Ultimate Ginseng by **Herbs Etc.**, \$17.98. www.herbsetc.com

Sage (*Salvia lavandulaefolia*, *S. officinalis*) has a tradition in European herbalism for improving memory. The leaf's essential oils are anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, help preserve the brain's acetylcholine (a neurotransmitter decreased in AD) and protect neurons from beta-amyloid's toxic effects. Several studies demonstrated memory enhancement with oral consumption of dried leaf extracts or small amounts of diluted essential oil in healthy people, both old and young. At least one study has shown that inhalation of the essential oil improves memory and mood.

Chinese club moss (*Huperzia serrata*) contains huperzine A, a chemical that inhibits destruction of acetylcholine and protects nerve cells from beta-amyloid and other noxious agents. A half dozen preliminary human trials show huperzine A improves some measures of cognitive function and behavior in people with AD.

While huperzine A sells as a dietary supplement, it's not something you'd take unless you had AD. Cott notes that this purified extract has a pharmaceutical effect much like the drug Aricept, though it may have fewer side effects. Brown and Gerbarg agree that that huperzine A is generally well tolerated, although some patients do report mild nausea, diarrhea and dizziness.

Another isolated plant chemical, curcumin, comes from the curry spice **turmeric** (*Curcuma longa*). A potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent, curcumin also inhibits formation of beta-amyloid and improves its clearance from the body. Experiments suggest that vitamin D and curcumin may have an additive effect in clearing beta-amyloid. Studies investigating the potential benefits in AD have just begun.

Intestinal absorption of curcumin is poor, though once in the blood this chemical passes readily into the brain. Things that enhance absorption include cooking turmeric in oil (as is the case in Indian cooking), encapsulating curcumin with bromelain and piperine (from pepper) or binding it with phosphatidylcholine. Cott's recipe is to heat a cup of full-fat milk, add a teaspoon of turmeric and a half teaspoon of pepper, and drink morning and evening.

Chemically speaking, curcumin is a polyphenol. Other polyphenol-rich plants include red grapes, berries, pomegranates, green and black tea, chocolate, and coffee. Berries are rich in a particular type of neuroprotective polyphenol called anthocyanins. People who regularly consume berries are less likely to develop Parkinson's disease. Grape polyphenols reduce production of beta-amyloid, inhibit its tendency to clump, and protect the brain cells from its toxic effects. They also reduce activation of microglia, brain cells associated with inflammation. Lab experiments also show **green tea** (*Camellia sinensis*) polyphenols protect against beta-amyloid-induced nerve toxicity. Humans and lab animals who drink green tea have a reduced risk of dementia, including AD and Parkinson's disease. Green tea drinkers also enjoy protection against cardiovascular disease, which is a risk factor for dementia. 🌱


Linda B. White, M.D., is frequent contributor to *The Herb Companion*, the co-author of *The Herbal Drugstore* (Rodale, 2003) and a visiting assistant professor in the Integrative Therapies Program at Metropolitan State College of Denver. Turn to Page 68 to purchase the book.

Try These ...

Supplements to support brain function that combine several herbs:

- Brain & Memory Tonic by **Herb Pharm**, \$12.80. www.herb-pharm.com
- Energy Tonic by **Urban Moonshine**, \$12.99. www.urbanmoonshine.com
- Mental Alertness by **Gaia Herbs**, \$27.99. www.gaiaherbs.com
- Ginkgo-Bacopa Quick Thinking by **Rainbow Light**, \$27.95. www.rainbowlight.com
- Mental Advantage by **EuroPharma**, \$39.95. www.europharmausa.com
- Ginkgo-Gotu Kola Extract by **Mountain Rose Herbs**, \$33. www.mountainroseherbs.com





Herb-Infused Jams in a Jiffy

You'll be amazed how easy it is to make these delectable jams—in minutes. Quick, simple and so tasty!



By Letitia L. Star

Photography by
Howard Lee Puckett

Styling by Virginia
Cravens-Houston and Judy Feagin

D Discover the super-simple secrets of homemade jams—chock-full of vibrant herb and fruit flavors. Here's a naturally sweetened method that takes only 10 to 20 minutes to assemble and cook, plus refrigerator chilling time. What's more, no special equipment or processing is required. In fact, you may already have on hand all of the ingredients necessary to make the best herb-flavored jams you've ever savored.

No Canning Required

Unlike traditional canning, quick jamming doesn't require sterilized canning jars or lids. To store your quick jams, simply use clean glass jars with lids (old jelly, olive and salsa jars work fine). Because these recipes rely on the pectin naturally found in fruit, store-bought pectin packets aren't needed, either.

These jams should be refrigerated and eaten within one to two weeks, meaning you won't have pretty jam jars sitting on your shelves for months. Fortunately, this won't be a problem if you and your family are as delighted with the delicious tastes and textures as we predict.

Quick jamming is a wonderful way to capture summer's herbs and fruits. In addition to fresh ingredients, you may use dried herbs and frozen berries or peaches. That means you can whip up your favorite homemade herby jam every day of the year—even in winter.



Garlic Lovers' Tomatillo Jam

Delectable garlic flavor complements the light, tangy brightness of tomatillos. Add fresh minced garlic to intensify the taste. Red pepper flakes will create a fiery sensation in your mouth. This jam is great on meats or tempeh. MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

- 1½ pounds tomatillos
- 1 teaspoon garlic granules
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon apple juice concentrate, thawed
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon fresh lime or key lime juice
- 1 teaspoon fresh minced garlic (optional)
- Pinch red pepper flakes (optional)

- 1** Remove husks from tomatillos. Wash and core.
- 2** Plunge tomatillos in rapidly boiling water for 3 minutes, or until tomatillos are soft and color changes from bright green to light olive. Remove with a slotted spoon. Let cool. Slip off tomatillo skins and coarsely chop.
- 3** Combine tomatillos, garlic granules, bay leaf, apple juice concentrate, honey, lime juice, minced garlic and red pepper flakes in a large nonstick skillet.
- 4** Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring constantly and mashing with the back of the spoon 5 to 15 minutes, or until mixture becomes the consistency of jam. Discard bay leaf.
- 5** Refrigerate jam in a bowl for about 1 hour until chilled. Conduct taste test and make corrections, if needed. Store in a clean glass jar with a lid.



Label these jams, and keep them in the fridge for up to two weeks.

Luscious berries are perfect for this quick and easy method, as are peeled peaches, apricots and plums. You also can create savory (and spicy!) jams with tomatillos, which gel nicely when simmered.

Sweeten Naturally

This approach relies on the natural sweetness of fruit, plus 100 percent apple juice concentrate and honey, which won't mask the incredible flavors of herbs and fruit. Other natural sweeteners to use are 100 percent white grape juice concentrate and agave nectar.

With this quick jamming method, you have the capacity to develop your own creative blends of herbs and fruits. Experiment with these herbs: mint, basil, lavender, tarragon, rosemary, ginger, garlic, bay leaf, pineapple sage, hyssop, lemon balm and lemon thyme.

To avoid having herb pieces decorating diners' teeth when they enjoy your jam, use one or more of the strategies below. Here's how to easily infuse herb flavor when quick jamming:

- 1) Ground dried herbs:** Add ground or powered herbs directly to fruit mixture when simmering. These herbs will remain in the jam.
- 2) Whole herbs:** Place whole herbs (such as bay leaf, crushed cardamom pods or mint sprigs) in simmering fruit mixture. Remove when cooking is completed.
- 3) Tea infusion:** Steep herbs in very hot water for 5 minutes or longer. Herbs can be fresh or dried. Strain and add herb liquid to simmering fruit mixture.

Not Just For Toast

Quick herb-flavored jams are not only delightful at breakfast, but also at brunch or on dessert. In addition to slathering your favorite toast, enjoy quick herb-flavored jams on cakes, cookies, ice cream, cheesecake, yogurt, soft cheeses, crackers, muffins, scones, waffles, pancakes and cereals. Some even serve as a glaze or a delicate sauce for savory meat, such as roast pork. For an extra-special July Fourth dessert, see the recipe for Red, White and Blueberries Parfait on Page 37.

To find the summer's finest in-season, locally grown herbs and fruits, check out farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture programs and other farm-fresh resources. 🌿

A healthy-living writer and photographer, Letitia L. Star has written more than 1,000 published articles, including many on herbs and gardening.



July Fourth Treat: Red, White and Blueberries Parfait

This colorful parfait layers vanilla ice cream with Double-Mint Blueberry Jam and Double-Mint Raspberry Jam. Perfect for your July Fourth celebrations or an everyday summer treat.
SERVES 4 TO 6

1 cup Double-Mint Raspberry Jam, see Page 38
1 to 2 pints vanilla ice cream or vanilla frozen
dessert made with soy, rice, almond or coconut
½ cup Double-Mint Blueberry Jam, see Page 38
Fresh mint sprigs, for garnish

- 1** Alternate layers of Double-Mint Raspberry Jam, vanilla ice cream or frozen dessert and Double-Mint Blueberry Jam.
- 2** Top with mint sprigs.

Perfect Quick Herb-Flavored Jam—Every Time

After you've completed cooking, put your jam in a bowl and refrigerate for about an hour until chilled. Then conduct a taste test. It's easy to adjust your jam recipes to please your own palate:

- **If too runny:** Strain jam through a fine-mesh strainer to remove excess liquid. Or return jam to a nonstick pan

and simmer over low heat to reduce excess liquid.

- **If too thick:** Stir in a little more apple juice concentrate until you have the desired consistency.

- **If not sweet enough:** These recipes tend to be on the tart side. To sweeten, return jam to a nonstick pan. Over low heat, add honey, apple juice concentrate

(thawed) or your favorite natural sweetener. Simmer to reduce excess liquid.

- **If too sweet:** Return jam to a nonstick pan. Over low heat, add ½ cup fruit and a little lemon juice. Simmer to desired consistency and taste.

Once you're happy with the results, refrigerate your jam in a clean glass jar. Label and eat within two weeks.

Double-Mint Blueberry Jam

The delicious duo of spearmint and peppermint blends beautifully with blueberries. For a more minty taste, add mint extract. Try this recipe with other good-for-you berries, such as raspberries and blackberries. If using dried mint, reduce quantity to 2 teaspoons. MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries
1 tablespoon fresh spearmint
1 tablespoon fresh peppermint
½ cup water
2 tablespoons apple juice concentrate, thawed
2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
½ teaspoon peppermint and/or spearmint extract (optional)

- 1 Rinse blueberries; drain. If using frozen, completely thaw.
- 2 Combine mints and water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil. Remove from heat, cover and steep 5 minutes. Pour liquid through a wire-mesh strainer into a measuring cup, discarding mint.
- 3 Combine blueberries, apple juice concentrate, honey and lemon juice in a large nonstick skillet. Add reserved cup mint liquid and extracts.
- 4 Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat, and simmer 5 to 15 minutes, stirring constantly and mashing berries with the back of a spoon until mixture reaches the consistency of jam.
- 5 Refrigerate jam in a bowl for about 1 hour until chilled. Conduct taste test and make corrections, if needed. (See sidebar, "Perfect Quick Herb-Flavored Jam—Every Time" on Page 37.) Store in a clean glass jar with a lid. Label and enjoy.

Note: To make Double-Mint Raspberry Jam, substitute 2 cups fresh or frozen raspberries for blueberries.

Raspberry & Cardamom Jam

The combination of raspberry and cardamom is pure heaven. MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

2 cups fresh or frozen raspberries
1 teaspoon ground cardamom
½ teaspoon ground ginger
2 to 3 tablespoons apple juice concentrate, thawed
2 to 3 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1 to 2 crushed cardamom pods (optional)

- 1 Rinse raspberries. If using frozen, completely thaw before making jam.
- 2 Combine raspberries, ground cardamom, ginger, apple juice concentrate, honey, lemon juice and cardamom pods, if desired, in large nonstick skillet.
- 3 Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring constantly and mashing berries with the back of a spoon, 5 to 15 minutes, or until mixture reaches the consistency of jam. Remove cardamom pods, if using.
- 4 Refrigerate jam in a bowl for about 1 hour until chilled. Taste and make corrections, if needed.



ON THE WEB

QUICK JAM AND JELLY RESOURCES

Find more resources for making these naturally sweetened treats at www.herbcompanion.com/quickjams.

Lavender-Peach Jam with Vanilla

The loveliness of lavender gives a truly unique flavor to peach jam. Add lavender buds for extra bursts of flavor. MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

2 cups peeled fresh or frozen peaches, thawed
2 tablespoons fresh or dried lavender buds
½ cup water
2 tablespoons apple juice concentrate, thawed
2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
½ teaspoon vanilla extract



To prepare fresh peaches, wash and score an x on blossom end of peach. Plunge into rapidly boiling water for about 1 minute. Quickly transfer to bowl of ice water. Peel and pit.

- 1 Slice peeled peaches as thinly as possible.
- 2 Combine lavender and water in a small saucepan; bring to boil. Remove from heat, cover and steep 5 minutes. Pour liquid through a wire-mesh strainer into a measuring cup. Reserve liquid and lavender buds.
- 3 Combine peaches, apple juice concentrate, honey, lemon juice, vanilla extract and reserved lavender liquid in a nonstick skillet. Add 1 teaspoon steeped lavender buds, if desired.
- 4 Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer 5 to 15 minutes, stirring constantly and mashing peaches with the back of a spoon until mixture becomes the consistency of jam.
- 5 Refrigerate jam in a bowl for about 1 hour until chilled. Conduct taste test and make corrections, if needed.



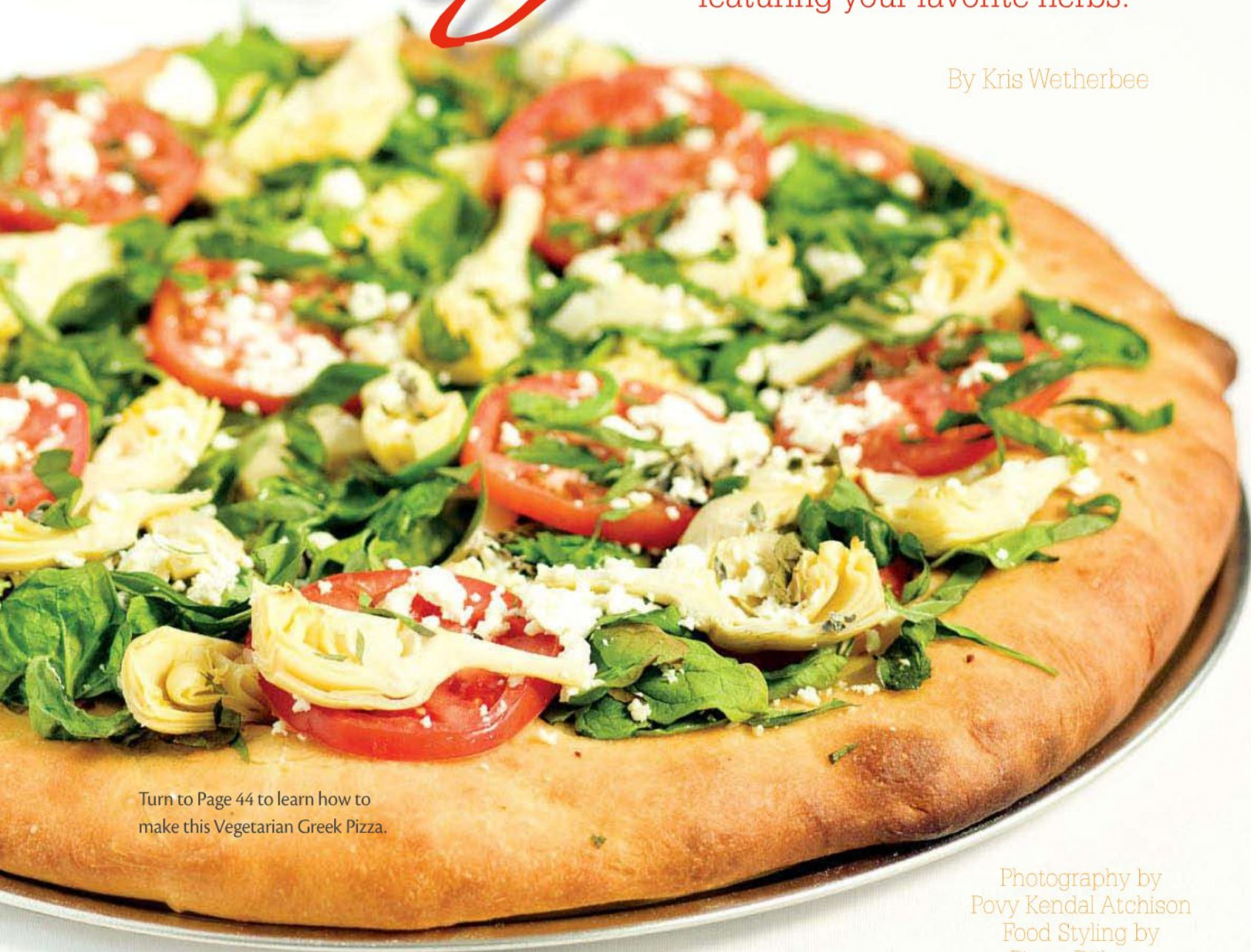
Using real vanilla beans imparts deep flavor. Add a pretty ribbon for a quick, thoughtful gift.

Put Pizzazz in Your

Pizzas

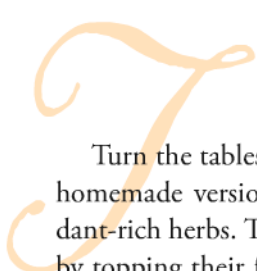
These homemade pies
are the perfect canvas for
featuring your favorite herbs.

By Kris Wetherbee



Turn to Page 44 to learn how to
make this Vegetarian Greek Pizza.

Photography by
Povy Kendal Atchison
Food Styling by
Pieter Dijkstra



Turn the tables on traditional pizza by serving up a healthier homemade version seasoned with a delicious array of antioxidant-rich herbs. That's how the ancient Greeks made their pizza; by topping their flatbreads with olive oil and tasty native herbs and spices.

Pizza took a culinary quantum leap in the late 1800s with the introduction of "pizza margherita," a creative concoction of tomatoes, mozzarella cheese and fresh basil. Today's takeout and store-bought pizzas continue to feature herbs in pizza sauce and as a shaker mix for seasoning pizzas. Throughout the years, the constant for great pizza is timeless herbs.

By using herbs on pizza, you can highlight or complement the flavor of seasonal vegetables and other toppings. Think outside the pizza box—think beyond your basic mozzarella, tomato-based pizza sauce and artery-clogging pepperoni.

Cash In on the Dough

Any pizza worth making begins with a great crust. A prepared crust will do fine in a pinch. But you can easily take pizza to a tasty new level by making your own dough.

Homemade dough gives you the option of making it whole-grain or adding in a few mixed herbs—such as basil, oregano and rosemary—for a tasty alternative. (See recipe on Page 42.)

The thickness of the crust depends on the amount of dough and how much you stretch or roll out the dough. Keep these other tips in mind when making pizza dough:

- Use unbleached flour rather than all-purpose flour. The higher gluten content makes for a crispier, more authentic crust.
- Don't over-knead the dough. Doing so can overdevelop the gluten and result in a tougher crust.
- Keep dough slightly moist when kneading. Adding too much flour during this process can result in a heavy, chewy crust.
- A good pizza dough should always be smooth and elastic. That said, always roll out dough slightly larger than the pan to allow for the slight shrinkage that will occur before you put your dough in the pan.
- No need to roll out dough when making a deep-dish pizza. Simply brush the pan with olive oil and press your homemade dough into place.
- Prebake a deep-dish pizza crust before adding toppings. Just bake in a 450-degree oven for 8 to 10 minutes or until dough puffs and begins to color, remove, and then add your sauce, cheese, and toppings.

- Forget the cookie sheet and buy a pizza screen or pizza stone instead. Both absorb moisture as the pizza is baking, resulting in a crisper bottom crust.

Set the Foundation

Sure, a tomato-based sauce always makes for a great-tasting pizza, but why stop there? There are many different types of sauces you can use, such as enchilada or tomatillo sauce, fresh salsa, alfredo sauce infused with tarragon, garlic-rich hummus, curry sauce, chutney, or even pesto sauce made with tomatoes, artichokes, or arugula. Go sauceless instead and create your own seasoned oil by mixing your favorite herb or herb blend with extra virgin olive oil. Add balsamic vinegar to the seasoned oil for even more pizzazz.

As for cheese, mozzarella may be the standard, but that doesn't mean you can't try other cheeses or create your own gourmet pizza blend, such as two parts mozzarella, two parts monterey jack and one part provolone. Whether used alone or in tasty combinations, other cheese options to consider include blue cheese, cheddar (white cheddar is a personal favorite), cream cheese, goat, gorgonzola, gruyère, fontina, feta, Parmesan and Swiss. The key is to choose a cheese that complements the topping ingredients.

Finish with Finesse

There's more to topping off a pizza than pepperoni, olives and peppers. Just about any vegetable, fruit, fresh herb or nut can be used. Whether using fresh herbs or dried, a rule of thumb is that one teaspoon of dried herbs is equal to one tablespoon of fresh herbs.

Roasting your veggies or caramelizing onions and other veggies on the stove before topping off the pizza often lends more flavor. As for moist toppings—such as sautéed spinach, olives, canned artichoke hearts or crushed pineapple—be sure to drain any liquids before putting the topping on the pizza. For a great finish, keep these other tips in mind:

- Always construct your pizza in the following order: crust, sauce, cheese, toppings. Feta and gorgonzola cheese are the exception and should follow the toppings.
- Cooking temperatures and times will vary depending on the pizza dough, toppings and depth of the pizza. A general guideline is 10 to 20 minutes in a 450- or 475-degree oven.
- Cool a hot-from-the-oven pizza on a wire rack for several minutes before cutting with a pizza wheel.

Try These

[Gluten-Free]

Gluten-Free Pizza Crust Mix by **Bob's Red Mill**, \$4.22
www.bobsredmill.com



[Herbal]

Tomato Basil organic pasta sauce by **Organicville**, \$4.99
www.organicvillefoods.com



[Organic]

Naturally White Unbleached Flour by **Hodgson Mill**, \$4.57
www.hodgsonmill.com



[Whole Wheat]

Whole Wheat Flour by **King Arthur Flour**, \$4.99
www.kingarthurflour.com



[Pre-Made]

Pesto pizza by **Amy's Kitchen**, \$7.99
www.amyskitchen.com



[The Recipes]

Speedy Pizza Dough

You can easily customize this recipe to your own personal taste. For example, make it whole-grain by substituting 1 cup of regular flour with whole wheat flour. Instead of cornmeal, try flax seed meal, nut meal or wheat germ. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of your favorite fresh herb or herb mix. MAKES ONE 14-INCH THICK-CRUST PIZZA, OR TWO 14-INCH THIN-CRUST PIZZAS

- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 cup lukewarm water
- 1 (¼-ounce) envelope dry rapid-rise yeast
- 2½ cups flour
- ¼ cup cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons honey
- ½ teaspoon salt

- 1** To prepare dough, add sugar to lukewarm water and stir. Sprinkle the yeast on top of the water and stir again until dissolved. Let the yeast mixture sit 5 minutes.
- 2** Using a food processor with a steel knife blade, add flour, cornmeal, oil, honey and salt;

pulse off/on several times to mix. Add yeast/water mixture through feed tube while the food processor is running and allow it to "knead" for about 1 minute or until dough is smooth. Add more flour or water, if necessary, while kneading to get a smooth dough.

- 3** Remove dough from food processor and allow to rest 5 minutes. Spread/stretch or roll out dough on a floured surface to about 14 inches in diameter or the size of your pan. Transfer pizza dough onto a pizza screen, or to a pizza peel spread with coarse cornmeal (for easy transfer to a preheated pizza stone). Turn edges under to form a slight rim.

Broccoli & Summer Squash Pizza

This pizza leans toward the traditional style with a slight twist, using a tomato-based sauce as the base and broccoli as an unconventional, but tasty, topping. MAKES ONE 12-INCH PIZZA

- 1 cup prepared marinara or spaghetti sauce
- 2 to 3 tablespoons tomato paste (depending on how thick you like your sauce)
- 1 (10-ounce) prepared pizza dough or crust
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ½ cup ricotta cheese
- 1 summer squash, sliced ⅜-inch-thick (about 1 cup)
- ½ cup diced red onion
- 1 tablespoon snipped fresh rosemary
- 1 to 2 teaspoons snipped fresh summer savory
- 1 to 1½ cups chopped broccoli florets (chop into ½-inch pieces)
- 4 to 6 slices turkey bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces then cooked (optional)

- 1** Preheat oven to 475 degrees. Combine marinara sauce and tomato paste. Spread sauce evenly over crust, leaving a ½-inch border. Sprinkle with mozzarella cheese and distribute small dollops of ricotta cheese evenly over pizza.

- 2** Arrange squash slices on pizza as you would for pepperoni. Sprinkle red onion, rosemary and summer savory over the summer squash. Top with chopped broccoli and cooked bacon. Bake for 12 to 16 minutes or until crust is golden and cheese is bubbly.



For the Broccoli & Summer Squash Pizza, use whatever summer squash you have handy, whether zucchini, straightneck or pattypan.

Consider these Food and Herb Combinations

BROCCOLI: basil, dill, lemon verbena, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, thyme

CABBAGE: basil, caraway, dill, fennel, marjoram, sage, savory, thyme

CARROTS: basil, chives, dill, marjoram, mint, parsley, sage, savory, tarragon, thyme

CORN: basil, chervil, chives, lemon verbena, parsley, sage, thyme

EGGPLANT: basil, dill, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, sage, savory, thyme

GREEN BEANS: basil, chives, dill, parsley, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme

FRUIT: cinnamon basil, lemon balm, lemon basil, lemon thyme, lemon verbena, mint, rosemary

POTATO: just about any herb

SPINACH: basil, caraway, chives, dill, lemon verbena, rosemary, thyme

SUMMER SQUASH/ZUCCHINI: basil, chives, dill, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory

TOMATOES: just about any herb that comes to mind, but especially basil, chives, dill, oregano, parsley, rosemary, savory, thyme

Pesto Pizza with Tomato & Eggplant

While you can use any good store-bought pesto, this is a great way to feature your own home-made version and use up the bounty of basil growing in your garden. MAKES ONE 15-INCH PIZZA

1 cup chopped eggplant
1 sweet red pepper, chopped (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon minced fresh oregano
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon olive oil
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup homemade or prepared pesto sauce
1 (12- to 14-ounce) prepared pizza dough
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded provolone cheese
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sliced firm tomatoes (about 5 roma-style tomatoes)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon minced fresh marjoram

1 Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Toss eggplant, red pepper and oregano with olive oil. Spread single layer in a baking sheet or shallow pan and roast 8 to 12 minutes, or until eggplant is tender and lightly browned; set aside.

2 To make pizza, spread pesto evenly over prepared pizza dough, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border. Sprinkle with mozzarella, provolone and Parmesan cheese. Arrange tomato slices over entire pizza just like you would for pepperoni. Top with roasted eggplant mixture and marjoram. Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until crust is golden and cheese is bubbly.

Vegetarian Greek Pizza

This no-sauce pizza may seem unconventional, but the flavorful combination of toppings and herbs makes this pizza a tasty crowd-pleaser. MAKES ONE 15- TO 16-INCH PIZZA

1 (15-ounce) prepared pizza dough
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 cup chopped baby spinach
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped baby arugula
10 large fresh basil leaves, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch strips
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon minced fresh tarragon or marjoram
3 plum or roma-style tomatoes, sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped red onion
1 (6-ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts, drained and coarsely chopped ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
1 cup crumbled feta cheese

1 Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Coat a large baking sheet or 14- to 15-inch pizza screen with nonstick cooking spray; set aside. Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to the size of the baking sheet or pizza screen. Transfer to the baking sheet or screen and brush crust with oil.

2 Arrange spinach, arugula, basil, tarragon or marjoram, and tomato slices over the pizza crust. Top with the red onion, artichoke hearts and feta cheese, spreading evenly to the edges. Bake until crust is crispy and golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Slice and serve.

Asparagus & Crab Pizza with Dill-Chervil Sauce

Dill and chervil are the perfect complement to asparagus and crab. Or you can mix it up by trying other fresh herbs, such as tarragon and dill, or tarragon and basil. MAKES ONE 15-INCH PIZZA

1 (12- to 14-ounce) prepared pizza dough
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup prepared alfredo sauce
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Greek yogurt
1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard
1 tablespoon minced fresh dill
1 tablespoon minced fresh chervil
1 teaspoon sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded monterey jack cheese
12 ounces lump crabmeat, flaked
1 cup chopped fresh asparagus
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

1 Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Place pizza dough on a nonstick baking sheet or pizza screen. In a medium bowl, combine alfredo sauce, yogurt, mustard, dill, chervil and sugar until thoroughly mixed. Spread sauce evenly over prepared pizza dough, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border for the crust.

2 Sprinkle both cheeses evenly over the pizza, then top with crabmeat and asparagus. Sprinkle chives over toppings.

3 Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until crust is golden and cheese is bubbly.

Chicken & Spinach Pizza with Fresh Basil & Thyme

With hints of licorice, mint and clove, fresh basil brings pizzazz to everyday pizza.

MAKES ONE 15- TO 16-INCH PIZZA



- 1 (15-ounce) prepared pizza dough
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 boneless chicken breasts, cut into strips or bite-sized pieces
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 6 ounces baby spinach
- $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup prepared pizza sauce
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups mozzarella cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded monterey jack cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped red onion
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh basil, cut into strips
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons fresh thyme

1 Preheat oven to 475 degrees. Roll out pizza dough to fit a large non-stick baking pan or pizza screen; set aside.

2 Heat olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook for several minutes. Add mushrooms and cook for 2 to 3 minutes more or until chicken is no longer pink. Remove chicken and mushrooms

to a bowl, leaving juices in the pan. Add spinach and sauté until spinach is wilted. Return chicken and mushrooms to skillet with spinach and mix; set aside.

3 To make pizza, spread sauce over crust just up to the edges. Sprinkle both cheeses evenly over the sauce. Arrange chicken/mushroom/spinach mixture evenly over crust. Top with red onion, fresh basil and thyme. Bake 13 to 18 minutes or until crust is crisp and golden.



Hawaiian Delight Pizza with Caramelized Onions

Lemon thyme really makes this pizza shine, but if it's not available, try substituting lemon basil or lemon verbena. MAKES ONE 12-INCH PIZZA

1 (12-inch) prepared pizza dough or crust
1 cup sliced sweet onions (about ½ medium onion)
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
¾ cup prepared pizza sauce
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
½ cup shredded white cheddar cheese
4 to 6 ounces prosciutto or Canadian-style bacon
1 (8-ounce) can crushed pineapple, thoroughly drained (about ½ cup)
⅓ cup chopped roasted red peppers
1 tablespoon pine nuts
1 tablespoon fresh lemon thyme

1 Preheat oven to 475 degrees. Transfer pizza crust to a baking sheet or pizza screen. Using a nonstick skillet, sauté onions in oil over medium-high heat 5 to 10 minutes or until lightly golden. Remove from heat.

2 Spread sauce evenly over pizza, leaving a ½-inch border around the rim. Sprinkle sauce evenly with both cheeses. Arrange prosciutto and caramelized onions over cheese, then top with pineapple and roasted red peppers. Finish toppings with pine nuts and lemon thyme.

3 Bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until crust is lightly golden and cheese is nice and bubbly.

Herb-Crusted Pork & Cabbage Pizza

Fennel and celery seed bring a tasty earthy flavor to lean pork, which is perfectly balanced with cabbage and fresh sage. MAKES ONE 15-INCH PIZZA

1 (12- to 14-ounce) prepared pizza dough
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
3 tablespoons toasted wheat germ
2 teaspoons fennel seed, divided
1 teaspoon celery seed, divided
¼ teaspoon salt
8 ounces lean pork (such as top loin),
cut into strips or bite-sized pieces
4 cups sliced green cabbage
2 to 3 garlic cloves, minced
½ teaspoon sugar
½ tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
½ cup shredded gruyère cheese
2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage

1 Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Roll out dough to fit a large nonstick baking pan or pizza screen. Baste crust with 1½ tablespoons olive oil; set aside.

2 Combine wheat germ, 1 teaspoon fennel seed, ½ teaspoon celery seed and salt in a large plastic bag; shake until combined. Add pork cubes or strips and shake to coat with the herb mixture. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium, add pork and cook, turning often, about 7 to 9 minutes. Remove pork from skillet and set aside.

3 Using same skillet, heat remaining ½ tablespoon olive oil over medium heat. Add cabbage, garlic and sugar along with remaining 1 teaspoon fennel seed and ½ teaspoon celery seed. Cook 2 to 4 minutes or until cabbage is slightly wilted. Add balsamic vinegar and cook 1 minute more; set aside.

4 Sprinkle both cheeses evenly over pizza crust. Arrange herb-crusted pork and cabbage mixture over crust, spreading to the edges. Top with fresh sage. Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until crust is lightly golden and cheese is bubbly.

Peach Pizza with Blueberry Sauce

This is not your everyday pizza, but it's certainly a pizza worth having every day as it's super easy to make and super delicious to eat. MAKES ONE 10-INCH PIZZA

¼ cup ricotta cheese
2 ounces softened cream cheese
3 tablespoons sugar, divided
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
One (10-inch) prepared pizza dough or crust
2 cups blueberries, fresh or frozen
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 to 2 peaches, peeled, pitted and cut into ¼-inch-thick slices
¼ cup chopped cashews
1 to 2 tablespoons minced fresh lemon verbena

1 Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Blend together ricotta, cream cheese, 1 tablespoon sugar and vanilla extract. Spread cheese mixture evenly over

crust, leaving a ½-inch border.

2 In microwave-safe bowl or small saucepan, combine blueberries, cornstarch and remaining 2 tablespoons sugar; toss to mix well. To make sauce in microwave, heat on high for 2 to 3 minutes (depending on your microwave's wattage) until sauce thickens. To heat on stove, bring to a boil and simmer for about 1 minute or until sauce thickens. Let cool slightly and spread thickened blueberry sauce evenly on pizza.


3 Arrange sliced peaches on pizza in a spiral design. Top with cashews; sprinkle lemon verbena on top. Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until crust is lightly golden. 🍓

Kris Wetherbee is a contributing editor who wrangles her herb garden in western Oregon.

*Turn the tables on traditional
pizza with delicious
antioxidant herbs.*

We gave the pork and cabbage
pizza (recipe at left) a pretty
galette-style crust.





Lemon verbena
(*Aloysia triphylla*)

Love Lemony Herbs

Summer recipes meet their
match with citrusy herbs.

By Jekka McVicar

MMy passion for herbs has evolved over 50 years—it started before I went to school. My mother, who was a keen grower of herbs and vegetables (to the extent that we were self-sufficient), had an herb bed that contained more than 25 different varieties. There was lemon thyme, French tarragon, dill, horseradish and spearmint, to name but a few. She was always bottling, preserving and baking. She taught me which mint to pick to make mint sauce and then how to prepare it, and for a number of years this was my special contribution to the Sunday meal.

When I was at school, I had a garden plot where I grew salads, including purslane and rather awful radishes, which I proudly brought home for the family to eat. When I started work, I was working in television—often on short contracts—and in between jobs I ended up working at Tumbler's Bottom Herb Farm. I became fascinated by the different herb varieties at the farm and with this burgeoning knowledge and access to new plants, my personal herb garden in Bristol expanded rapidly.

It was from this garden that the idea for Jekka's Herb Farm originated. I was at home with my two small children one day when a girlfriend asked if she could have some French tarragon. I told her to help herself and it dawned on me that she could not buy it anywhere, yet I could grow it. Within a few months, my husband and I had converted our small back garden into a mini organic herb farm and had started to supply local greengrocers and a garden center with organic culinary pot herbs. Within a year, we needed more space, so we moved the farm to our present site in South Gloucestershire. The business has grown from there, and in the early 1990s we started exhibiting organic culinary and medicinal herbs at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) flower shows, where we have now been awarded more than 60 RHS gold medals. There are currently more than 650 species of herbs being grown at the farm, which we supply to our customers in the United Kingdom, mainly via mail order.

My interest in herbs is ever-increasing and I am particularly fascinated by their incredible versatility. Herbs have long been a part of our history, yet we often remain wary of utilizing them to their full potential. Not only do herbs impart flavor, aroma and texture to cooking, they are also beneficial to our diet and have medicinal and even household uses. It is well-documented, for example, that thyme contains antiseptic oils, which counteract decay and contamination; sage contains a natural preservative, which prolongs the shelf life of food; and aniseed-flavored herbs, such as French tarragon, help the digestion of fatty foods.

The recipes included here, taken from *Jekka's Herb Cookbook* (Firefly Books, 2011), are inspired by my love and enjoyment of food. I have discovered that one of the enormous benefits of cooking with herbs is their amazing ability to enhance dishes: they can transform a cheap cut of meat, stretch a sauce for pasta and add a new dimension to vegetables, eggs or just about anything!

Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

As a gardener, you cuss this herb because, like its cousin mint, it is invasive; however, as a cook I find it is incredibly useful and underused. Neither my mother nor grandmother used lemon balm for cooking, although my grandmother planted it around her beehives. The flowers are high in nectar and it was said that rubbing a new hive with the leaves encouraged the bees to settle.

DESCRIPTION

Lemon balm is a hardy herb that dies back in winter and reappears in the spring. It has clusters of insignificant pale creamy flowers in summer, and intensely lemon-scented, mid-green, oval, toothed textured leaves.

It can be grown from seed or division and is a tolerant plant that will grow in all soils provided it is not waterlogged. Ideally, the best situation is well-drained soil in a sunny position. It will

be invasive in light fertile soils, but it happily adapts to being grown in a container in a soil-based potting compost.

HISTORY IN COOKING

This herb is steeped in history; records show that more than 2,000 years ago, the ancient Greeks and Romans prescribed lemon balm not only for indigestion and overindulgence, but also to chase away melancholy. It was also popular in Elizabethan times for use in salads, as a tea and to flavor wine.

HARVESTING AND USES

Leaves: The best-flavored leaves are those picked before it flowers, and are harvestable from early spring until autumn. When added to stewing fruit, the leaves cut down the amount of sugar needed and also remove the tartness. Fresh leaves can also be added to cream cheese, vinegars, teas and can be chopped with vegetables.

Flowers: Pick the flowers throughout summer but remove all green parts before use, as they do not have a flavor. Add the flowers to salads—both fruit and leaf—and use in jellies and butters.

PROPERTIES

Lemon balm is high in vitamins A, B and C, and it is a natural carminative and antispasmodic and a great digestive. A tea made from the leaves is not only a digestive, it is also calming and relaxing and helps sharpen the memory.

DIFFERENT VARIETIES

Golden lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis* 'All Gold'): This is similar to the standard lemon balm with the exception of the leaves, which are golden yellow. Plant in partial shade. To maintain good leaf color, cut back in summer.

Variegated lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis* 'Aurea'): This is also similar to the standard lemon balm, but has variegated gold and green leaves, with a milder flavor.

Lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citratus*)

When I first started my herb farm more than 20 years ago, lemongrass was only just appearing in Chinese food stores, and now it is available year-round in many supermarkets! I have become a huge fan of this herb since seeing it growing in South Africa. There I could appreciate how classically elegant, in true grass fashion, this plant is, rather than the small plants I raise and the small stumps of stem I first used to buy all those years ago.



Howard Lee Puckett

Transform excess lemongrass into this lovely oil, perfect for salad dressings and soups.

DESCRIPTION

Lemongrass is a tropical clump-forming grass with clusters of tiny grass flowers that only appear in the tropics, and lemon-scented, linear, gray-green leaves with robust cream and beige cane-like stems.

You can raise lemongrass from seed or from division, but you will need to do this in a warm environment. You can only successfully grow lemongrass outside where the night temperature does not fall below 46 degrees. So in the Northern Hemisphere this herb can be planted out in summer only. Plant in any soil, including a heavy soil, as long as the summers are hot and wet and the winters are warm and dry.

This herb makes an excellent container plant; use a loam-based compost and don't let it dry out in summer. In winter, keep the plant in a frost-free place, 40 degrees minimum.

When the light levels and night temperatures drop, the plant will go dormant. Reduce the watering to minimal over winter and cut back the grass to 4 inches above the stems. In early spring, as the days lengthen and the temperatures rise, you will notice the grass starting to grow; at this time, cut off all dead growth and repot if necessary.

HISTORY IN COOKING

Lemongrass has been used for thousands of years in Thailand, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the West Indies, where it is not just considered an important culinary herb, but is also highly valued for its many medicinal properties. This herb has come to the fore in European and North American cooking only during the past 20 years.

HARVESTING AND USES

Leaves: Pick these throughout the summer in cold climates and all year in tropical climates. Young leaves have a much fuller flavor than older ones, which tend to be slightly bitter. The lemon flavor complements curries, seafood, garlic and chiles. Tie a handful of leaves into a knot and add to water to flavor rice or steaming vegetables. Remove before serving.

Stems: Cut the stems from mature plants throughout the summer months in cold climates and year-round in tropical climates. To prepare the swollen stems, cut at the base just where the stem joins the soil, and trim off the top leaves to save for later use. Peel off the outer green sheaths around the thick stem; this will reveal a white core. Slice finely or pound the white stem to release the oils and flavors before adding them to your chosen dish.

PROPERTIES

The leaves and stems are rich in iron, chromium, magnesium, zinc, selenium, potassium and phosphorus; they also contain vitamins A, B and C. The digestive properties are carminative and diuretic. A tea made from fresh leaves is refreshing and a stomach and gut relaxant. It is also a good antidepressant.

DIFFERENT VARIETIES

East Indian lemongrass, Cochin grass, Malabar grass (*Cymbopogon flexuosus*): This is similar to lemongrass except it grows taller and the base stems have a red rather than beige color. It has a good lemon flavor and can be used in the kitchen in exactly the same way as lemongrass.

Palmarosa, Rosha Indian geranium: (*Cymbopogon martinii*

var. *motia*): This is a smaller tropical grass than the two lemongrasses, and the linear gray-green leaves have the most heavenly rose scent. Use the leaves to flavor cakes, puddings and syrups. Infusing the leaves in milk and then adding the milk to various puddings is a wonderful way of using this herb.

Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*)

The scent of this herb transports me back down memory lane. Rubbing its rough leaves and releasing its sharp lemon-sherbet scent lifts the spirits and reminds me of my great-aunt Ann. She had this shrub growing against her back door, so as you entered the house from the garden, you brought the scent of lemon verbena with you.

DESCRIPTION

This herb is tender, so it will need protection below 40 degrees. It is a deciduous shrub, which means that it drops its leaves in winter, leaving it looking like a dead twig, which it is not. The new leaves reappear late in the following spring. It has clusters of tiny white flowers tinged with lilac in early summer and rough, pale green lance-shaped leaves that smell strongly of lemon sherbet.

Plant it in a light free-draining soil in a warm, sunny site. It makes an ideal container plant; use a soil-based compost with extra grit. Place the container in a warm, sunny, light and airy spot and water well throughout the growing season. Protect from frost in winter by either bringing it into a cold greenhouse or cold frame (if it is in a container), or covering it with a cloche or horticultural fleece (if it is planted out).

Jekka to Headline Herb Society Conference

Jekka McVicar grows more than 650 herb varieties on her herb farm in South Gloucestershire, England. The United Kingdom's leading organic herb grower, Jekka's Herb Farm has won more than 60 gold medals from the Royal Horticultural Society, including 14 at the renowned Chelsea Flower Show.

As well as the day-to-day running of the farm, Jekka is also well-known for her

regular appearances on television and radio broadcasts on gardening and cookery and as an enthusiastic writer on herbs, having published five books.

Jekka will be the keynote speaker at the 2011 Herb Society of America educational conference, to be held June 23 to 25 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For more information, see www.herbsociety.org.



Lemongrass Oil

This oil is lovely for salad dressings, mayonnaise, stir-fry dishes and soups. MAKES 2 CUPS OIL

- 5 swollen lemongrass stems
- 2 cups light olive oil
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

1 Prepare the stems by removing the outer sheaths and revealing the white inner stem. Slice finely, then, using a pestle and mortar, add stems and pound until you have a paste (you may have to do this in a few batches). Add a small amount of oil, mix, then spoon into a medium-sized bowl. Repeat until you have turned all the stems into paste. Once all the paste is in the bowl, add remaining oil and lemon

juice and stir well.

2 Pour into a container with a sealing lid, and pop into the fridge. Use within 5 days; shake well before use as the lemon juice will separate.

Note: Swollen lemongrass stems refers to the pale bottom part of the stalk. Alternative method: After 2 days, strain the oil through an unbleached coffee filter paper, pour into a clean sterilized container with a sealing lid and keep in the fridge. Use within 3 days; shake well before use.

Almond and Lemon Balm Stuffed Apples

The lemon balm added to the center of the apples lends a warm lemon flavor. Serve with clotted cream, homemade custard, horseradish cream or brandy butter. SERVES 4

- 4 large Granny Smith apples
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus 2 tablespoons extra for dotting
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ½ cup ground almonds
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped lemon balm
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅓ cup flaked almonds, toasted
- ¼ cup maple syrup

- 1** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- 2** Wash and generously core the apples.

Carefully, using a sharp knife, put a shallow slit in the skin, not deep into the flesh, running all the way around the apples' diameter. Place the apples in a roasting tin.

3 Cream butter with sugar, beat in the ground almonds and stir in lemon balm, lemon zest, cinnamon and flaked almonds. Using a small spoon, put ¼ of this mixture into each cored apple, then drizzle 1 tablespoon maple syrup over each apple, dot with butter and bake in the oven for about 45 minutes, until the apples are soft but not mushy.

Spicy Lemongrass and Butternut Squash Soup

This is a great combination: aromatic lemongrass and spicy hot chile with comforting butternut squash. A soup with gusto. SERVES 4 TO 6

- 2 tablespoons light olive oil
- ½-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- ½ teaspoon finely sliced red chile
- 1 teaspoon peeled and sliced lemongrass stems
- 1 large onion, finely sliced
- 1 pound butternut squash, peeled, sliced in half, seeded, then sliced into chunks
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon light soy sauce
- 1½ cups coconut milk
- 1½ cups water
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Heat oil in a large pan and fry ginger, chile, lemongrass, onion and butternut squash, stirring constantly until just beginning to color. Add garlic and cook for a few more minutes. Add soy sauce, coconut milk or milk and water. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for about 25 minutes until the squash is tender.

2 Either using a hand blender or a food processor, puree until smooth. Taste, add salt and black pepper as required. Reheat, but do not boil, and serve.

Note: You can substitute reduced-fat milk for the coconut milk, if need be.

HISTORY IN COOKING

This herb originated in South America and arrived in Europe in the 18th century, where it was used to perfume finger bowls during banquets.

HARVESTING AND USES

Leaves: These can be picked all summer, but the best-flavored leaves are those picked in early summer while they are bright green and before they start to lose color and curl in the autumn. The leaves can be used to flavor oils and vinegars, fruit puddings and jellies. They can transform cakes, too: simply lay whole leaves on the base of a well-greased cake tin, pour in the cake mixture, then bake in the usual way.

Flowers: Pick flowers throughout the summer. They have an intense lemon sherbet flavor and are lovely scattered over fruit or salads, or added to jellies.

PROPERTIES

The leaves contain vitamins A, B and C and they are digestive, antioxidant, antispasmodic and a sedative. A tea made from 3 to 5 leaves last thing at night helps the digestion, and as it is a mild sedative and calmative, it also aids a good night's sleep.

DIFFERENT VARIETIES

White brush (*Aloysia gratissima*): This is a half-hardy deciduous shrub with delicate, small, slightly vanilla-scented, white or violet-tinged flowers and rough, lance-shaped leaves. Its leaves are lightly minty, so they're great for making tea and adding a mint flavor to many dishes. 🌿



Used with permission from Jekka's Herb Cookbook by Jekka McVicar (Firefly Books, 2011). Purchase on Page 68.

Lemon Verbena Crème Brûlée

My mother made the best crème brûlée. Alistair, my son, has inherited her passion and always rates restaurants and cooks on how well they make this pudding. This is a wonderful recipe; the flavor, with its hint of lemon sherbet, is unique, and makes this brûlée very special. SERVES 4

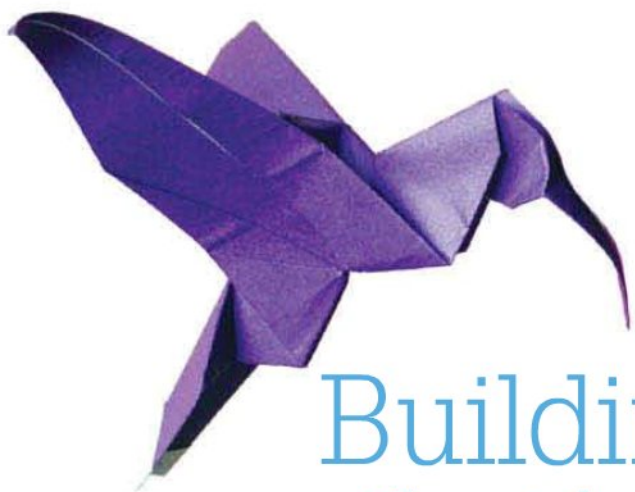
1 cup milk
1 handful lemon verbena leaves, finely chopped
(reserve a few whole ones to garnish)
7 egg yolks
½ cup fruit sugar
¼ cup whipping cream
¼ cup Demerara sugar or light brown sugar
Lemon verbena sprigs, for garnish

- 1** Preheat oven to 275 degrees.
- 2** Put milk in a small pan with chopped lemon verbena leaves; bring to simmering point, remove from heat and leave to cool and infuse.
- 3** Place egg yolks in a bowl with sugar and whisk until pale and thick. Add the cooled infused milk and the cream and whisk well. Pass through a fine-meshed sieve.

4 Ladle the mixture into 4 ramekin dishes and set them in a roasting pan. Pour in enough water to come three-quarters of the way up the side of the ramekins, pop into the oven and cook for 1 hour or until set. Leave to cool, then refrigerate until ready to serve.

5 Just before serving, sprinkle Demerara sugar or light brown sugar over the top of each pudding and caramelize with either a blow torch or by putting them under a hot grill. Decorate with fresh lemon verbena sprigs.





Building a World that's Safe to Pollinate

BY RHONDA FLEMING HAYES

Among the many joys of herb gardening is the chance to observe the abundance of wildlife that visit—the industrious bee, the fleeting butterfly, hovering hummingbirds and more. Of course there are other, less-welcome visitors—the hungry rabbit or mischievous raccoon—but still, most of us would agree that a garden without wildlife seems static and even sterile.

While seeking food, water, shelter and nesting sites in and around our herb gardens, many of these animals and insects are also engaging in the valuable mechanism of pollination. Plants and their pollinators have co-evolved to acquire physical traits that attract one another in a mutual relationship, making sure pollen is carried from one flower to another. In addition, the flowering cycles of the plants have evolved to be closely aligned with the life cycles and needs of their pollinators. Together these characteristics form what is called a pollination syndrome. Using knowledge of these syndromes, herb gardeners can learn to attract and increase pollinator numbers, making for a healthier and livelier landscape.

The Facts of Life: Fertilizing Flowers

Pollination is the act of transferring pollen grains from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma of another flower. When this transfer is successful, fertilization occurs, which leads to seed development and fruit production, thus guaranteeing the plant's continuing existence.

Eighty percent of all plants rely upon pollination for survival. But more astoundingly, for humans, one out of every three bites of food is made possible by pollination. Without pollination, say goodbye to cabbage and avocados, watermelons and coconut, and more tragically, strawberry shortcake, blueberry cobbler, apple pie, and chocolate anything. Hamburgers also can't happen without the pollination of alfalfa to feed cattle. As it turns out, pollination hits all of us very close to home.

Pollinators are keystone species, meaning that a large number of other species depends upon them for their existence. Pollinators are also considered an indicator species, with their well-being connected intimately with the bigger picture of overall environmental health. Dramatic declines in pollinator populations are attributed to three main factors: loss and fragmentation of habitat, degradation of remaining habitat, and pesticide poisoning.

There are two types of pollination—biotic and abiotic. Eighty percent of all pollination is biotic, meaning carried out by animals. Abiotic pollination is accomplished by wind or water, the vast majority by wind.

Grasses are an example of plants pollinated by wind; they produce fine grains of pollen in copious quantities to allow for the vagaries of the weather, while at the same time vexing human beings with annoying allergies. Corn and wheat, for instance, are dependent upon the wind for pollination.

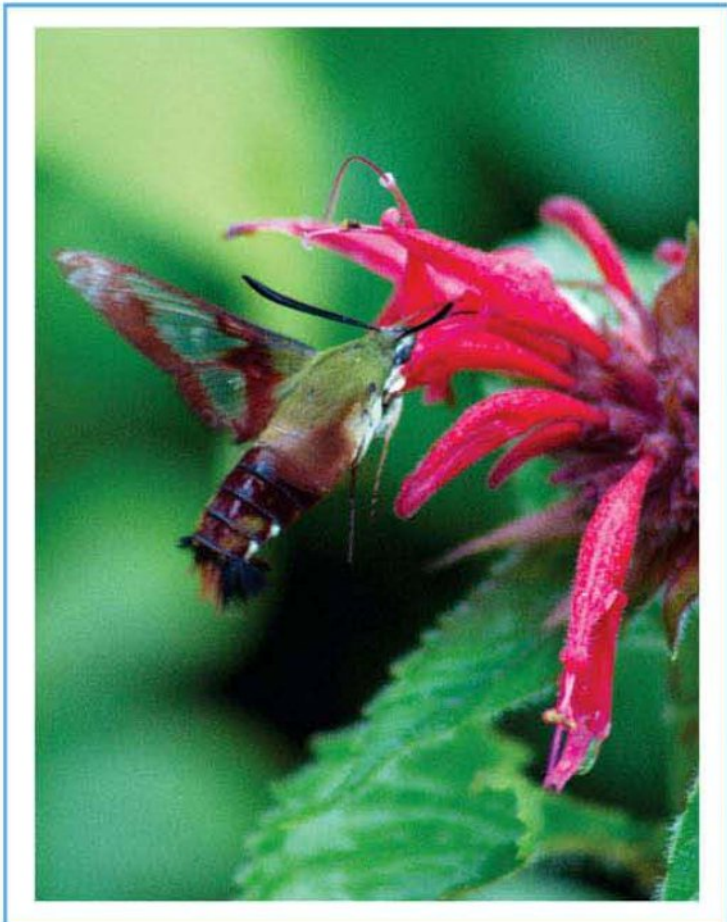
One garden alone can't save the bees,
birds and butterflies, but if each of us
plants just a few herbs pollinators love,
what a difference we could make.



It is best to plant blocks of color, with each type at least four feet in diameter, to help the pollinators locate the food source easily.

All other pollination is performed by a variety of animals ranging from the tiny tachinid fly to the rather large and unlikely lemur. The most common pollinators are birds, bees, butterflies, beetles, bats, ants, moths and flies. It can be said that flowers are the tools plants use to make seeds and thereby fulfill their genetic destiny.

Floral strategies to attract pollinators take many forms, such as visual cues, food, scent, mimicry and entrapment. Visual cues are most evident in flower color and shape, and sometimes, a nectar guide is present. A nectar guide is like an arrow on a road map indicating the location of nectar in the form of veining or pattern on flower petals. Sometimes these guides are only visible in ultraviolet light. Nectar is the obvious reward for many pollinators in searching out plants; it is a rich cocktail of sugar water, amino acids, minerals and vitamins. Some insects will also eat some of the pollen that they are intended to carry. The scents that attract various pollinators range from highly fragrant to putrid.



A hummingbird moth hovers beside a bee balm bloom.

Some flowers will mimic the very insect they need for pollination by posing as a possible mate. Lastly, some plants will lure pollinators only to trap and then dissolve the unsuspecting victim.

Beyond that, plants have evolved with different flowering times throughout the growing season to decrease competition and provide pollinators with a constant food supply. In turn, these pollinators have adapted with specialized body parts and behaviors to transport the pollen from one plant to another.

Bees: Efficient Pollinators

Herb gardeners are well aware that bees love herbs; blooming herbs almost vibrate with their activity as summer arrives. Bees especially love lavender, thyme, mint, marjoram, oregano, borage and bee balm, among others. But what is it that actually attracts them?

The pollination syndrome of bees tells us that they select brightly colored day-blooming flowers, full of nectar, often tubular in shape, with a structure that provides a landing platform. Bees are said to prefer flowers of blue or yellow, although it is not unusual to see them on blossoms of any color. Their favorite flowers also emit a sweet or minty fragrance. Beyond that, it depends upon the length of their tongue whether they visit a plate-like calendula or a cup-like sage.

Since there are about 4,000 different species of bees, plants appeal to them through plenty of variations. Bees are grouped by their nest-building behavior and by whether they are solitary or social. While the commercial honeybee may live in the iconic white box hive, just over two-thirds of bees are ground-nesters. They lay their eggs or tend their larvae in burrows where they provision individual cells for their young. The rest are wood-nesting, constructing homes in mostly abandoned beetle larva tunnels or dry cavities of dead trees, and sometimes man-made structures like hollow walls and barns. Others will parasitize and rob the nests of other bees.

Solitary bees are not loners; they actually live in an aggregation with other solitary bees, but they only tend their own nests. Mason bees, leafcutter bees and carpenter bees are examples of this category. Solitary bees may take up to a year to complete their life cycle, and pupae can lay dormant during cold and drought, waiting until conditions are more favorable.

Social bees (like the honeybee and bumblebee) form colonies where they build nests together and tend young in a more complex hierarchy of queens and workers. Turnover is high, with development taking four to six weeks.

Most solitary bees are *polylectic*, meaning that they feed and gather pollen from a large number of flowering plants and can adapt to changing availability of food sources. Others confine themselves to a particular plant family and some even are dependent upon a single plant species. These latter types are most at risk from habitat loss.

Social bees are also polylectic. Herb gardeners who observe bees systematically mining a particular group of herbal flowers at a time are seeing a behavior called “flower constancy,” where bees feed from a single species on a particular foraging trip.

Prolific and efficient, bees are the most successful pollinators; they can gather and deliver large amounts of pollen on the stiff hairs of their bodies or carry it in specialized body parts, or pollen baskets. It is alarming that bees are now under threat; entomologists believe that environmental stress, disease and parasites are acting alone and/or in concert to cause a worrying decrease in numbers.

Birds Rely on Sight to Find Nectar

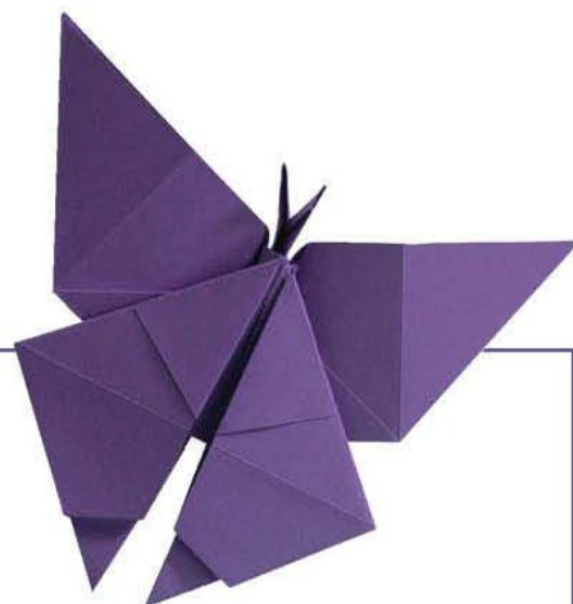
Birds have no sense of smell, so pollinating birds rely instead on their keen vision to search out flowers with deeply hidden nectar. Once they find their food source, hummingbirds and other nectar-eating birds are dusted around their faces with pollen that they then take to the next flower. Some birds accomplish pollination while hunting for insects and spiders concealed within flowers.

Of the 2,000 species of bird pollinators across the globe, hummingbirds are the best-known and most beloved. They need to eat several times their weight in nectar every day to maintain the frenetic pace of their beating heart: more than 1,000 beats per minute! It is pure joy to watch them hover and feed among the flowering herbs in our gardens.

The tiny birds possess an eagle’s eye to spot their favored red, orange and yellow flowers but they are also seen frequently feeding on the blue blooms of herbs like catmint and sage. Their slender pointed bill and long tongue are adapted to probe tubular, funnel-shaped flowers such as lobelia and nasturtium. Beyond the herb garden, hummingbirds are a key species responsible for wildflower pollination.

Butterflies are Determined

Butterflies are less efficient than bees but just as persistent at pollination. Butterflies see the red flowers that bees cannot. They use their long tongue (called a *proboscis*) to siphon nectar from suitable flowers, while their brushy bodies accumulate pollen



Butterfly Bait: 20 Herbs to Entice Butterflies

Plant these pretty herbs and watch your garden come alive with butterflies. These varieties are of particular interest to butterflies and some moths because they offer a “platform” where the butterflies can alight while they sip their meals.

Basil (*Ocimum* spp.)
 Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
 Calamint (*Clinopodium* spp.)
 Caraway (*Carum carvi*)
 Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)
 Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*)
 Coneflower (*Echinacea* spp.)
 Dill (*Anethum graveolens*)
 Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
 Heliotrope (*Heliotropium arborescens*)
 Hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*)
 Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.)
 Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)
 Mint (*Mentha* spp.)
 Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)
 Pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*)
 Rose (*Rosa* spp.)
 Sweet marjoram (*Origanum majorana*)
 Thyme (*Thymus* spp.)
 Yarrow (*Achillea* spp.)



grains. Butterflies need a flower structure that supplies a landing platform on which to perch while feeding; bright, day-blooming flowers growing in clusters or umbels meet this description. In the herb garden, butterflies love the blossoms of chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), thyme (*Thymus* spp.), basil (*Ocimum* spp.), coneflower (*Echinacea* spp.), pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), yarrow (*Achillea* spp.), garlic chives (*Allium tuberosum*) and butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), among others.

Moths Go for Pale, Moon-Lit Flowers

Moths need the same landing platform as butterflies, but since they fly at night their targeted flowers are white or other pale colors better seen in moonlight. Often these flowers only open in late afternoon or evening. Besides their color, evening primrose (*Oenothera* spp.), yucca (*Yucca* spp.), mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), and tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) smell good to moths.

Beetles Visit Ancient Species

Beetles were one of the first pollinators and therefore visit ancient species like magnolia. They look for white, dull or pale green day-blooming flowers shaped like bowls with the sex organs exposed for effortless access. However, they will also attend small flower clusters with easily available pollen, like goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) or butterfly weed (*Asclepias* spp.). They are attracted to fruity, spicy and sometimes fetid scents. Roses are among the flowers pollinated by beetles. Water lilies use a devious system of entrapment to achieve pollination; luring the beetle to its luminous inflorescence, it drowns the unsuspecting insect in the liquid that covers the female flower part, leaving the pollen to settle to the bottom of the bloom.

Flies are Fascinated with Dull Flowers

This group of pollinators includes gnats and mosquitoes—yes, mosquitoes. It is usually the syrphid, or flower flies and tachinid flies, that do the job of pollination. They are drawn to dull green, white, cream or even dark-reddish brown flowers, some with translucent patches upon the petals, often with unpleasant odors. As annoying as midges are, they make chocolate possible. They are enticed to the small, white downward-facing flowers of the cocoa plant (*Theobroma cacao*) by the flowers' mushroom-like smell.

Other Pollinators

Ants and slugs do their part in pollination by crawling into low-growing, inconspicuous flowers like that of wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*). Bats pollinate more tropical herbs like mangoes, figs and guavas, as well as the agave from which tequila is made. Larger animals such as honey possums are known to pollinate eucalyptus.

Help Conserve and Support Pollinators

The very act of planting an herb garden is a big first step in helping conserve pollinators. So all herb gardeners have already progressed to the point where they can fine-tune their gardens to increase the number and variety of pollinators that visit.

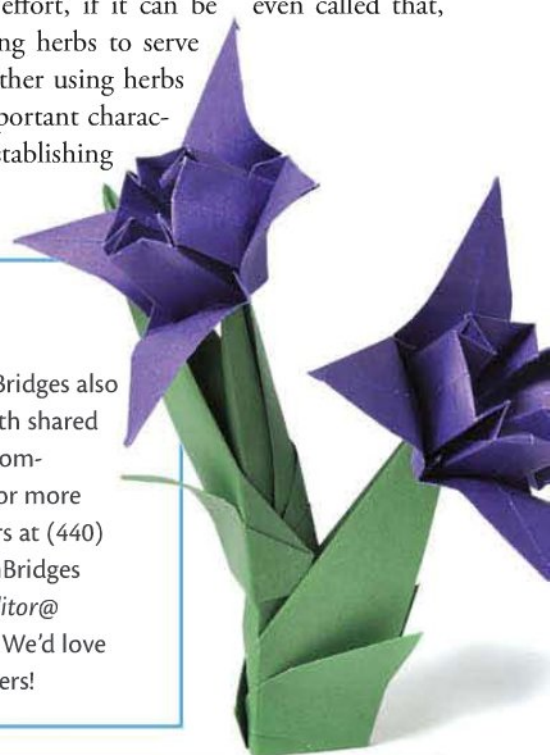
The fun part of this effort, if it can be even called that, is planting more flowering herbs to serve as foraging habitat. Whether using herbs or not, there are four important characteristics to follow when establishing the habitat.

Build a Plant Bridge for Pollinators

When we increase the number of avenues through which pollinators may safely and successfully travel from one plant population to another, we help make genetic diversity among our native plants more secure. With this goal in mind, The Herb Society of America has created its GreenBridges program.

Certified GreenBridges gardens serve as corridors for the movement of birds, bees and butter-

flies that pollinate native herbs. GreenBridges also serve as networks connecting those with shared interests, providing opportunities for communication, education and research. For more information, contact HSA Headquarters at (440) 256-0514. And if you do create a GreenBridges certified garden, please let us know (editor@herbcompanion.com) and take photos. We'd love to share the information with our readers!



- It should incorporate a succession of flowers in order to provide blooms throughout the entire growing season.
- It should have several different species in bloom at a time.
- It should combine annuals and perennials.
- It should be free of pesticides.

One example of a pollinator-friendly herb garden might be starting with purple garden chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) and thyme (*Thymus* spp.) in spring; adding summer-blooming bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*) and borage (*Borago officinalis*); ending with late-blooming Joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*), hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*), calamint (*Clinopodium* spp.) and garlic chives (*Allium tuberosum*).

There should be a diversity of flower shapes to accommodate the different mouth parts of all of the pollinating insect and birds. Offering a spectrum of colors will attract more pollinators. But, it is best to plant blocks of color, at least four feet in diameter, of each species to help the pollinators locate the food source. This also supports the behavior of flower constancy.

Native plants that have evolved along with the pollinators are the best food sources, allowing pollinators to forage most efficiently. Native mints, clovers and coneflowers are just a few likely candidates, among a very long list of possibilities. Consulting a university extension website to identify plants native to your region would be advisable.

Leaving the garden a little untidy can be a good thing for pollinators. Allowing spent herbs to stand over winter provides nesting and overwintering sites for pollinating insect adults, larvae and eggs. For the same reason, unless it is a danger, leaving a dead tree can be an important component in building habitat. Other common landscape (evergreen hedges, rock walls, stone patios, mulched paths) can shelter pollinators during their life cycle. Water sources can be bird baths and even puddles. Leaving some bare ground gives a home to ground-nesting bees. Butterflies need damp spots to “puddle” or siphon nutrients from the ground.

The Challenges of Pollinator Conservation

As pollinators struggle to survive in a changing world, it seems unlikely that one individual herb gardener can do much for the daunting task. In fact, in *The Forgotten Pollinator* (Island Press, 1997), Stephen L. Buchmann states fatalistically, “Alone, a small garden for pollinators can’t conserve threatened or endangered pollinators or plants, but it can remind people of the primacy of



Butterflies need a sturdy flower on which to land, such as the structured blooms of Joe-pye weed.

the precious keystone relationships between them.”

But if we imagine a series of small habitats, a corridor of interconnecting “patches” of pollinator-friendly properties, eventually the fragmentation might lessen. It would also heighten awareness of the problems facing this miracle of nature that is often taken for granted.

A truly successful herb garden is one where pollinators find food, water, shelter and nesting sites. The presence of fluttering birds and buzzing insects only builds upon the joy we find in our gardens, while adding another link in the chain of habitats to help ensure the survival of these invaluable creatures. 🍷

Rhonda Fleming Hayes was a university extension master gardener for more than a decade. Now she writes at www.thegardenbuzz.com.

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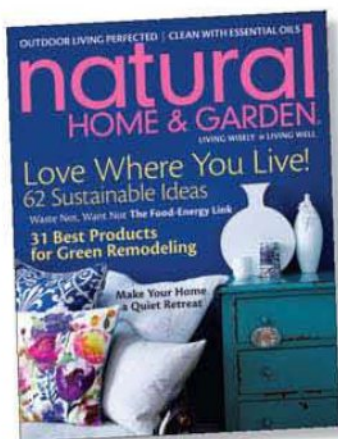
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Grow a Cocktail Garden

Concoct a garden that yields delicious drinks.

BY KATHLEEN HALLORAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GAYLE FORD

Want some summer backyard fun? Create a cocktail garden around your patio to spread some cheer for a gathering of friends or for just relaxing after a hard day's work. This is a garden to get creative with—grow your favorite herbal garnishes, mixes, ingredients for alcoholic beverages and even a liver-booster to help out if you overdo the festivities. This inviting little garden will also be a cocktail party conversation-starter, no question.

Throw in some silliness if you'd like. Whisky barrels and half barrels are irresistibly appropriate containers for some of the tender plants in our cocktail collection. Use wine corks for mulch if you have a ready supply. Do you collect beautiful bottles? I've been known to sometimes choose a wine simply for the

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GARDEN SPACES

The Cocktail Garden Herbs

These plants are a great start for your very own cocktail garden. Some, like the agave and hops, require quite a bit of labor to yield beverages. But all will help create a fabulous patio haven.

BLUE AGAVE (*Agave tequilana*). At 6 feet or taller, this large succulent, native to Mexico, can make a handsome smaller specimen plant in a container. It's drought-tolerant and it needs a sandy or gritty, fast-draining potting medium, a sunny location and winter protection.

TOMATO (*Solanum lycopersicum*). Plant in a sunny spot, stake or cage it, and give it plenty of water and regular feeding. Any flavorful tomato produces a good tomato juice; some favorites for juicing include 'Porter', 'Rutgers', 'Ponderosa Pink', 'Better Boy' and many beefsteak varieties.

MILK THISTLE (*Silybum marianum*). With glossy, marbled leaves, this plant can reach 5 feet or so in bloom, with a purple thistle flower head. It can be annual or biennial, and is hardy to Zone 7.

LOVAGE (*Levisticum officinale*). This rock-hardy perennial, with its celery taste, can reach 5 feet by midsummer in sun or part shade. Propagate from seed or division.

HOPS (*Humulus lupulus*). A fast-growing, twining vine for a fence line, this is a perennial hardy to Zone 3. It needs a full-sun location and a deep, rich soil; start it from cuttings, suckers or purchased plants.

LIME AND LEMON TREES (*Citrus* hybrids and varieties). These small trees thrive in warm landscapes (Zones 8 and higher), although they are grown in other climates in pots on the patio and brought indoors for the winter, as most won't tolerate a freeze. Needs a sunny location. Dwarf citrus varieties are available, including a dwarf Meyer lemon; try Makrut lime (*C. xhystrix*) leaves, which are often used in Thai cuisine.

LEMON BALM (*Melissa officinalis*). A mint relative with a lemony fragrance, this hardy perennial is best grown in a pot; it can be aggressive in the garden. Easy to grow from seed, cutting or division.

SPEARMINT (*Mentha spicata*). This common garden mint, including such varieties as 'Kentucky Colonel', is easy to grow but a bit rambunctious, so it is best grown in a container. Start it from a cutting, a division from a friend, or a transplant from a garden center, as it does not set viable seed; adaptable, can grow in sun or part shade.

MOJITO MINT (*M. xvillosa*), also called Cuban mint or yerba buena, is propagated by cutting or division. Keep your mints in separate containers, and harvest or prune regularly to continually force out new green growth and prevent flowering.

shape or color of the bottle to add to my collection. Display them here, where they can line a pathway or sit prettily among the plants to twinkle in the sunlight. String some lights or hang some lanterns to create a party atmosphere for the cocktail hour.

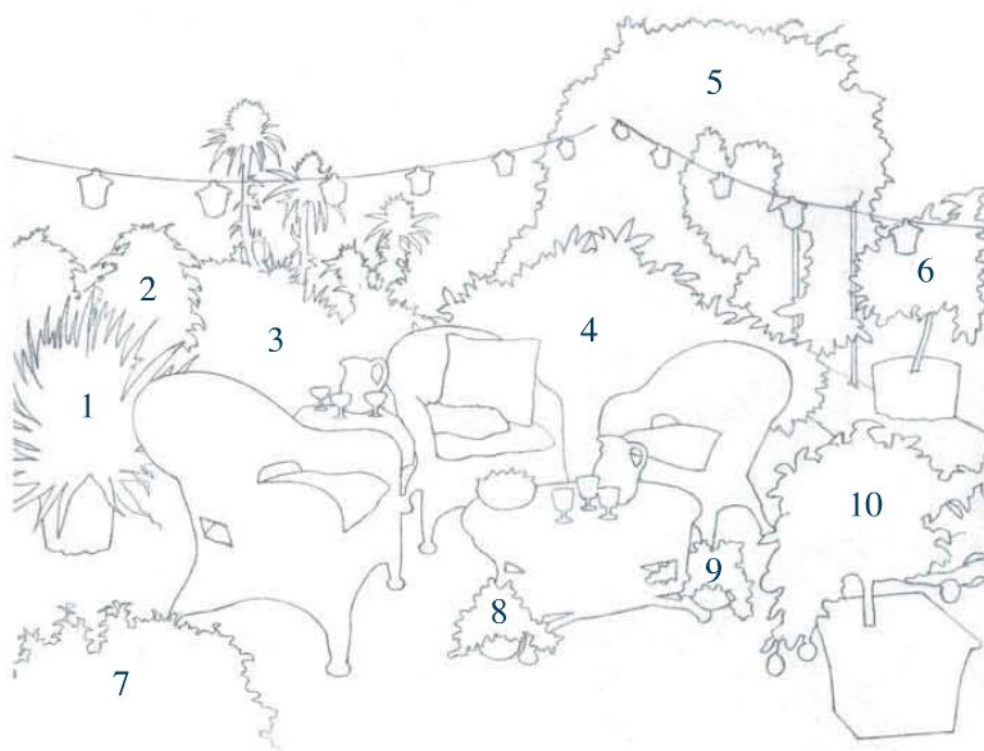
Herbs for Cocktails

There are quite a few herbs that play starring roles in mixed drinks. Probably the most familiar are the mints that are mulled for a mint julep and the popular mojito; that strong minty flavor is an essential ingredient to the character of these festive drinks. Are you interested in brewing your own beer? Whether you are or not, you can plant some fast-growing hops along a fence line. Lemon balm is an easy garnish for a summer wine cooler (or tea for the teetotalers).

For the legion of fans of Bloody Marys, the perfect morning-after pick-me-up and headliner of the Sunday brunch, grow some tomatoes for juicing and some lovage, since its hollow stems and celery taste make it part garnish, part straw. Add a slice of lime from your patio lime tree, and how perfect is that?

Depending on your climate and your willingness to overwinter pots indoors, citrus trees can fit in perfectly here. Many cocktails and highballs demand a wedge of lime or a sliver of lemon peel (James Bond's martini, for example). Over the years, citrus plants, including dwarf varieties that lend themselves to pots, have become popular and are often available in garden centers. While they take some nurturing because of their tender nature, they can become pets and even give back fruit in agreeable conditions.

A handsome, stately blue agave in a container claims a place here, but largely



Plant Key

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Blue agave | 6. Lime tree |
| 2. Tomato | 7. Lemon balm |
| 3. Milk thistle | 8. Spearmint |
| 4. Lovage | 9. Cuban mint |
| 5. Hops | 10. Lemon tree |

a symbolic one (as nobody I know knows how or has the equipment to make tequila at home). Don't forget the milk thistle, whose seeds yield the best liver boost in the natural world. It has been used for thousands of years for its protective, cleansing effects; you can make a simple decoction from the seeds.

Care and Containers

This little garden, placed on or surrounding a patio, will be so close by that you won't forget to water and feed the plants, especially if it becomes a place you hang out in at the end of the day.

Get to know your plants and their needs, including water requirements, fertilizer needs, cold hardiness and light requirements. Some of these suggested

plants need overwintering indoors, so be sure that you know the average first and last freeze dates in your area; if you don't, a quick online search or phone call to the county extension office will give you that information.

Row cover, an inexpensive lightweight fabric that lets in sunlight and moisture but gives some cold protection, is helpful to have on hand for sudden cold snaps. A good garden center can turn up some useful plant trays with wheels on them, to make transporting a large pot easier. Garden centers also have other helpful pot-lifting aids. 🌱

Contributing Editor Kathleen Halloran is a freelance writer and editor living and gardening in beautiful Austin, Texas.



3 Toxic Twins

Avoid these poisonous plants
that look like edible favorites.

BY TINA MARIE WILCOX

Rob Cardillo

Q I'm afraid of mixing up edible plants with toxic ones. Any tips?

A During the winter and early spring, before plants mature in size and begin to bloom, it is easy to misidentify the green friends and foes. Even well-seasoned gardeners and naturalists can be fooled by the foliage of new growth. In my herb garden, I allow volunteer seedlings from established plants and gifts brought to the garden by birds, roving mammals and the wind. In wild, uncultivated spaces, diversity reigns. While the “innocent-until-proven-guilty” policy can be rewarding, to stay safe one must be certain of the identity of botanicals before ingesting them—some useful herbs have harmful lookalikes.

Four herbs that have similarly shaped woolly leaves are comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), Russian comfrey (*S. xuplandicum*), wild comfrey (*Cynoglossum virginianum*) and foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). It is easy to confuse these plants in the early spring. They all have hirsute leaves and like to grow near trees and in humus-rich soil.

All of these plants that share the common name comfrey have been used medicinally in folk traditions. *Symphytum* poultices and infusions have been used externally to treat bruises and sprains. Home herbalists who choose to drink the tea or swallow any part of the plants should be warned that *Symphytum* comfrey contains dangerous pyrrolizidine alkaloids that are toxic to the liver. Internal use of these plants is not recommended by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and, since July 2001, products that were meant to be taken internally that contained comfrey and other plants with pyrrolizidine alkaloids have been removed



Rob Cardillo (left); Steven Foster (right)

It is easy to mistake deadly foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), at left, for comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), at right, in the early spring. Although foxglove is a beautiful cottage garden biennial, it is also deadly.



Susan A. Roth (left); Rob Cardillo (right)

You can tell the difference between the toxic daffodil (*Narcissus* spp.), at left, and garlic (*Allium sativum*), at right, by using your sense of smell. Daffodils have none of the characteristic sulfur odor.



Rob Cardillo (2)

Poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), at left, is larger than Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*), at right. Steer clear of hemlock—a small nibble could cause paralysis or even death.

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Saxon Holt

Beautiful plants can still lead to fatal poisonings: Narcissus bulbs and leaves (top) contain the alkaloid lycorine, and foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*, right) contains the cardiac glycoside digitoxin.

from the market. Nevertheless, some people continue to use comfrey internally.

Wild comfrey (*Cynoglossum virginianum*) is native to eastern U.S. deciduous forests. Though it is listed on the FDA Poisonous Plant Database, I was unable to find any documentation of human fatalities from eating, drinking an infusion or smoking the leaves of this plant. Wild comfrey is listed in *A Field Guide to Medicinal Plants of Eastern and Central North America* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000) by Steven Foster and James Duke as an herb used by Native Americans and by herbalists in the 19th century as a substitute for *Symphytum*.

People who ingest any of the comfries should be careful not to mistake them for foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). This beautiful but deadly cottage garden biennial has escaped from cultivation, naturalizing in moist, shady locations in temperate climates. The leaves contain the cardiac glycoside digitoxin. In carefully measured therapeutic doses, *Digitalis* saves lives as a modern medication against heart failure. According to *A Field Guide to Venomous Animals and Poisonous Plants* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994) by Steven

Foster and Roger Caras, mistaking *Digitalis* for *Symphytum* has caused accidental fatal poisonings.

Two other common garden plants with somewhat similar leaves, especially in the spring, are garlic (*Allium sativum*) and daffodils (*Narcissus* spp.). Both have long, slender and flat leaves that are attached to bulbs below the earth. The best way to tell the difference between toxic *Narcissus* and the alliums is by using the sense of smell. Daffodils have none of the characteristic sulfur odor of the alliums. *Narcissus* bulbs and leaves contain the alkaloid lycorine. Fatalities are rare, but the symptoms include bloody diarrhea, vomiting, body tremors and extreme salivation.

Apiaceae is the new name for members of the old Umbelliferae, or umbrella, family, to which a host of useful foods and culinary herbs and a few famously deadly plants belong. While most urban gardeners need not worry about mistaking poison hemlock for a carrot, wild foods enthusiasts need to be very careful to know one from the other.

The mother of all carrots is called Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*). It is a biennial, native to temperate Europe and Asia, that

has naturalized throughout much of the eastern United States. The leaves are finely cut and resemble carrot foliage; the stems are hairy. The roots are white and can be dug and used just like carrots in the first year of growth. Queen Anne's lace grows in high and dry places such as meadows, gardens and along roadsides. The roots tend to be small and tough when found growing on uncultivated land. A shrewd wild foods forager might venture down to lower ground, such as a ditch (where the soil is rich and damp) in search of larger roots. Beware, though—poisonous members of the Apiaceae family often grow in these places.

Poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), like Queen Anne's lace, is a biennial. The difference between them is that

poison hemlock is usually much larger and has hollow, grooved, smooth stems with purple splotches. Be careful not to get the wrong seedling, as a small nibble can cause paralysis and a nasty death.

Be not afraid—rather, be well-informed and cautious when wildcrafting and harvesting unfamiliar plants for food or medicine. Study your field guides, attend hikes and classes led by knowledgeable individuals, and most importantly, do no harm. 🌿

Tina Marie Wilcox has been gardening at the Ozark Folk Center State Park in Mountain View, Arkansas, for more than 25 years. She and Susan Belsinger co-authored The Creative Herbal Home, available on Page 68 or visit www.herbcompanion.com/shopping.



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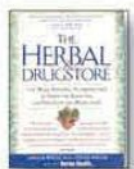


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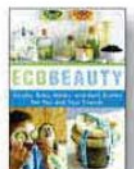
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BY RANDY KIDD, D.V.M.

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A As the body's largest organ, skin is made up of simply wondrous stuff. The skin's many layers of epithelial cells create a rugged body encasement that's tough enough to contain all of a pet's inside organs and the other fluids that come with the territory, and yet it's porous enough to let the healing essences of herbs enter at will. Skin is generally impermeable to all manner of potential invaders; in some areas it's as stretchable as spandex, while in others it is as thick and unyielding as boot leather. Miraculous stuff indeed.

The skin is the organ of first defense. A pet's fortress against all outside penetrators, the skin is subject to nicks and scrapes, pokes and gouges, and bruises and abrasions. Fortunately, herbal remedies work extremely well on minor skin problems. I've found that herbs heal skin wounds better, faster and less painfully than do the antibiotics and steroids used by most regular vets. However, skin also may be the last organ to heal because many alternative medicines work by healing from the inside out.

Before we look at some of the topical herbs I've found helpful, let's take a brief look at the ways you can get herbs onto your pet's



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Mullein (*Verbascum* spp.)

skin. **Note:** For open wounds, carefully clip away any hair that could become matted in an open wound, then gently cleanse the area with an herbal soap.

Spritz: This is my favorite way of applying herbs—nothing could be easier. Mix up a batch of herbal tea; let it cool; put the mix into a spritzer; and spritz it on the affected areas. Spritzes rapidly dry out and don't stick around like ointments, so you may need to spritz several times daily.

Macerated pure herb/poultice: This is perhaps the best way to utilize mucilaginous herbs such as plantain. Take a leaf or two of the fresh herb, chop it up, and add a little oil or witch hazel to make it gooier and stickier.

Oils: Oils will stay on the injured area longer than spritzes, but they can be messy. To make your own, put some fresh or dried herb into a jar and cover the herb with oil (such as olive or sesame), using enough oil to top the wetted herb with 1/4 to 1/2 inch of extra oil. Cap the jar tightly, cover with a brown paper bag, and let it sit on a sunny windowsill for seven to 10 days. Shake often. Strain, and put the oil in a tightly capped bottle, stored in a cool, dark place.

Salves and ointments: Salves are semi-solid medicinal preparations, and ointments are fatty preparations with the consistency of cold lard (a common

substance used in the making of ointments). These products will remain on the area of application for a longer period of time, but many critters will persistently lick at the product.

My Favorite Topical Herbs

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*). I tell folks that if they're going to buy a commercial product, first be certain the product contains calendula, and then almost any of the other herbs listed below will add to the product's healing powers. Calendula has anti-inflammatory and antifungal activity and is an astringent. In addition, it enhances the growth of epithelial tissue over open wounds.

Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) is excellent for all sorts of nicks, scrapes, itches and burns. Lavender is an antiseptic with antibacterial activity.

Aloe (*Aloe vera*). The fresh juice of the leaves is excellent for burns, and it aids in the healing of all wounds.

St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). This herb is beneficial for any lesion that appears to have damaged a nerve, or for those wounds or open areas where your pet is really irritated by the itch.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). Yarrow is good for fresh wounds that are oozing blood, and excellent for the lacerations that need a boost to encourage healing.

Echinacea (*Echinacea* spp.). Used internally, echinacea balances the immune system and treats infections. It's also good externally as an antimicrobial, and it has a local anesthetic effect, temporarily deadening the pain of cuts or burns.

Plantain (*Plantago* spp.). Plantain is especially good for treating wounds where you need to draw out the pus or other contaminating material. For the topical treatment of abscesses, I recommend using just a plantain poultice first—until the abscess is actively draining. Then add one or more of the healing herbs listed here.

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*). The large leaves of comfrey are good for making up a healing poultice to be applied to any wound surface. Its leaves are astringent and aid in wound healing.

Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*). Chamomile flowers are anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and they help with the healing process. In addition, chamomile is antispasmodic, and many animals seem calmed when the plant is used, even topically.

Mullein (*Verbascum* spp.). Much like comfrey, the leaves of mullein make an excellent addition to any healing poultice. And mullein flowers in an oil or witch hazel base are good for treating ear

infections—they have antiseptic and healing activity and a local anesthetic effect.

Generalized Skin Conditions

When dealing with a tougher-to-treat skin condition, topical herbs may not be enough. Generalized skin conditions can be due to many causes, such as allergies or nutritional problems. Any of these conditions are best treated with a holistic approach. Two skin conditions are worth mentioning here: parasites—including mites, fleas and ticks—and “hot spots.”

Over the years, I must have tried 100 herbal “cures” for parasites. What I’ve found is that some of the herbals seem to work well at first on some animals, but they don’t stand up under the tests of time or effectiveness on a high percentage of animals. Sure, there are lots of herbs that have moderately effective repellent activity or they may have pretty fair knock-down power for fleas. But they don’t get to the major part of the flea population: the eggs and larvae. Eliminating ticks from a premise is even more challenging than flea removal. To effectively cure a real parasite problem, you may need to begin with a chemical kill, then use a preventive program that could include herbs.

Hot spots are localized areas where a pet has licked and gnawed until there’s a red, open wound. These can begin with almost any irritant—fleas are a common instigator. Treatment with some of the soothing herbs mentioned here can be very effective against hot spots. 🐾

Randy Kidd holds doctorates in veterinary medicine and veterinary and clinical pathology. He has retired from his regular veterinary practice and now lives in eastern Kansas.

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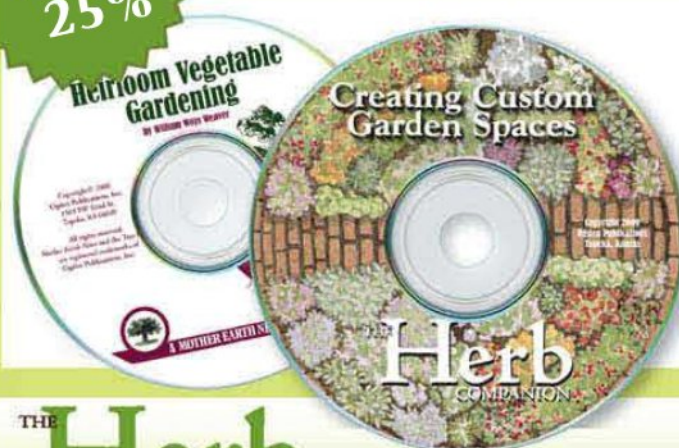
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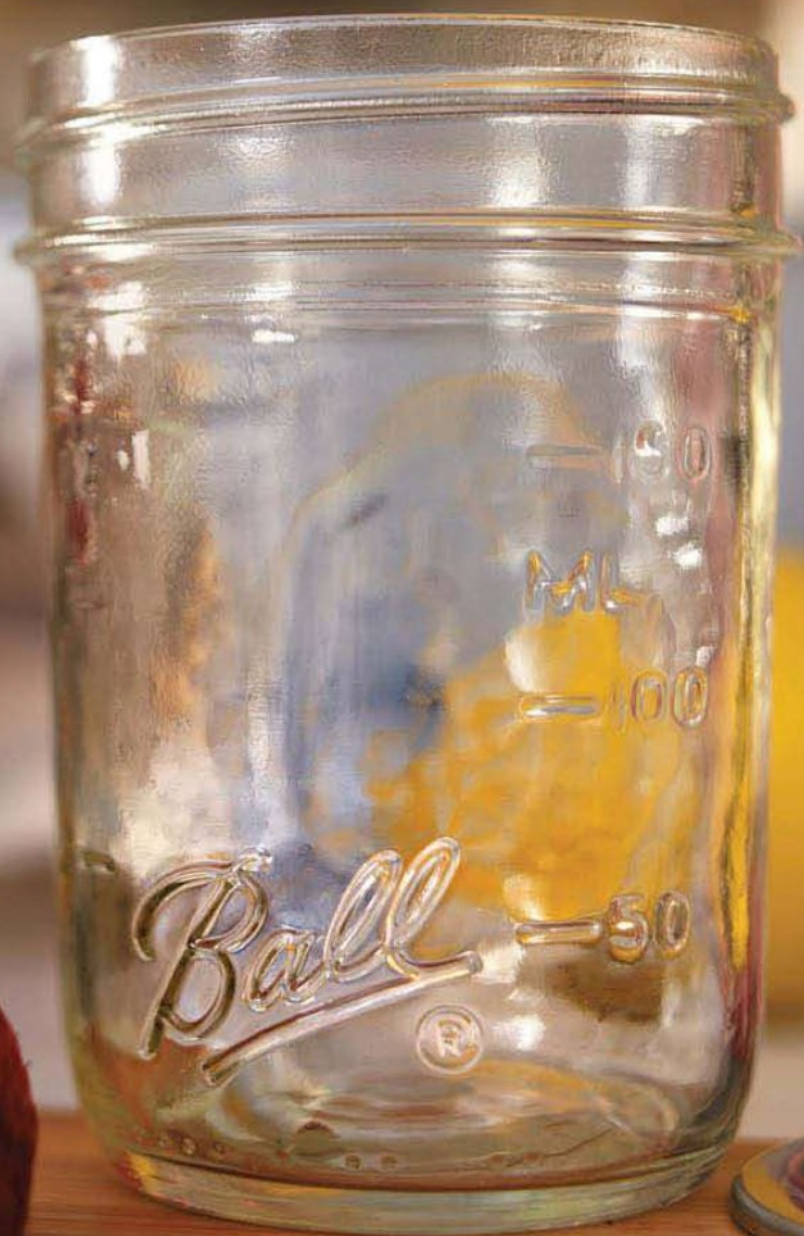
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